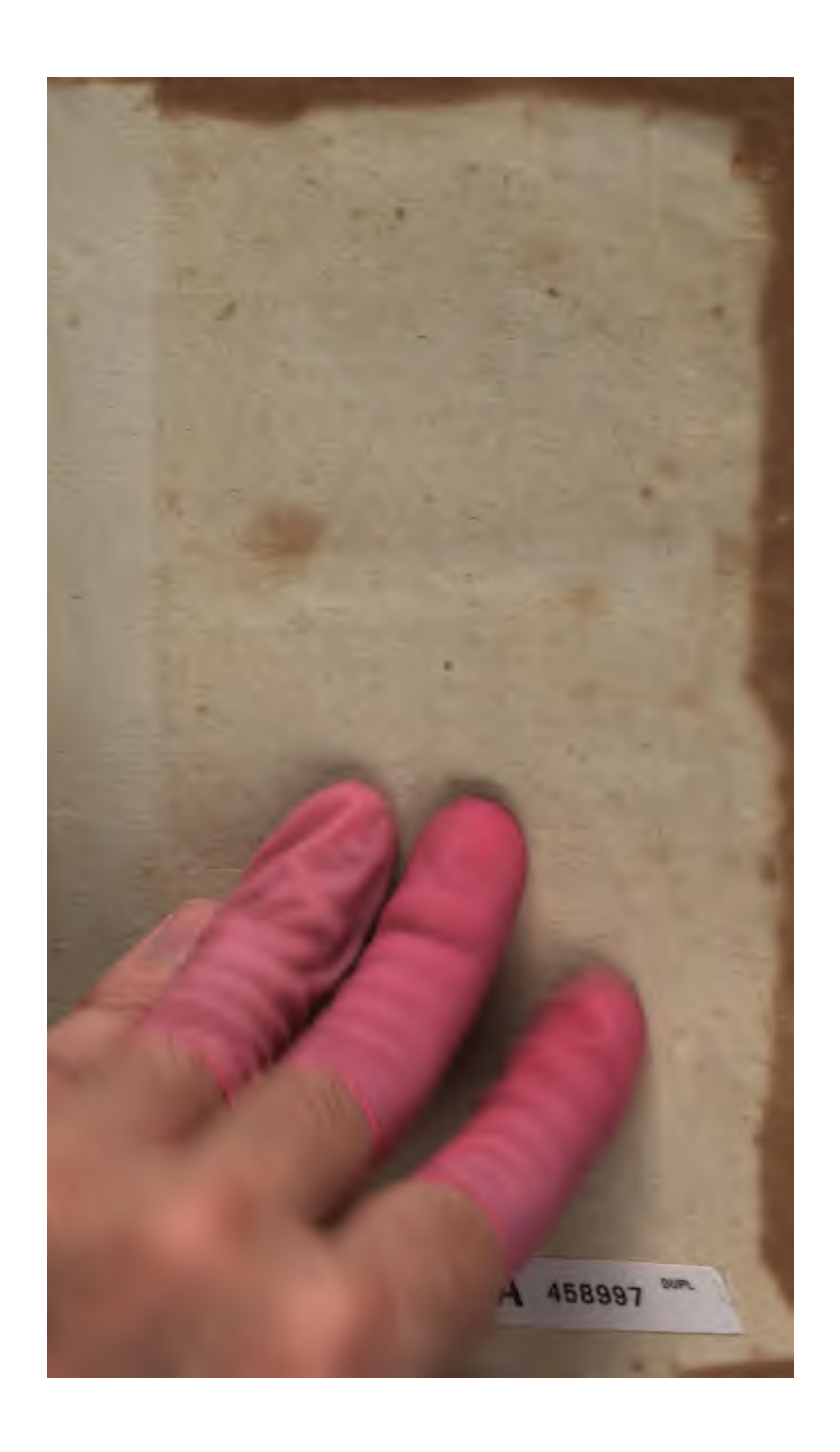


Wm Greive

Ord House


A 458997 DUPL

MESSIAH.

FIFTY

EXPOSITORY DISCOURSES,

ON THE SERIES OF

SCRIPTURAL PASSAGES,

Which form the Subject of the celebrated

ORATORIO OF HANDEL.

PREACHED IN THE YEARS 1784 AND 1785,

In the PARISH CHURCH of ST. MARY WOOLNOTH,
LOMBARD-STREET;

BY JOHN NEWTON, RECTOR.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

—— —— Ah!
Tantamne rem, tam negligenter, agere! TER.

Oh, that they were wiſe, that they underſtood this——!
DEUT. xxxii. 29.

LONDON:
PRINTED FOR THE AUTHOR; AND SOLD BY
J. BUCKLAND, PATER-NOSTER-ROW; AND
J. JOHNSON, ST. PAUL'S CHURCH-YARD.
M DCC LXXXVI.

MESSIAH.

HIS

CHARACTER, ADVENT,

AND

HUMILIATION.

VOL. I.

UNUM PRO MULTIS DABITUR CAPUT.

VIRG.

For the love of Christ constraineth us, because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead. And that he died for all, that they which live, should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.

2 Cor. v. 14, 15.

TO THE

PARISHIONERS

OF

ST. MARY WOOLNOTH,

AND

ST. MARY WOOLCHURCH HAW,

LONDON;

THESE SERMONS ON THE

MESSIAH,

ARE AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED BY THE

AUTHOR.

TO REMAIN, AS A TESTIMONY
OF HIS RESPECT FOR THEIR PERSONS,
AND HIS SOLICITUDE FOR THEIR WELFARE,
WHEN HIS PRESENT RELATION TO THEM,
AS THEIR MINISTER,
SHALL BE DISSOLVED.

PREFACE.

THE following Sermons, as to the ſubſtance (for moſt of them are conſiderably abridged) were preached to a public and numerous aſſembly. And, therefore, an accurate and logical diſcuſſion of the ſeveral ſubjects, was not aimed at. They are rather popular diſcourſes; in which, the Author, though he wiſhed not to treat the politer part of his auditory with diſreſpect, thought it likewiſe his duty, ſo to adapt his manner to the occaſion, as to be intelligible to perſons of weak capacities, and in the lower ranks of life. He conceives himſelf to be a debtor to every claſs of his hearers; and that he ought to endeavour to pleaſe all men, with a view to their edification; but, farther than this, not to be greatly affected, either by their approbation, or by their cenſure.

Many of the ſubjects, are ſo nearly coincident, that repetitions could not be always

avoided, without the appearance of affectation. Besides, as it may be expected, that in a large congregation, there are always some persons present for the first time; with respect to these, an observation may be *new*, though, perhaps, the more stated hearers, may recollect its having been mentioned before. For a similar reason, such repetitions are not improper, in print. Many persons read part of a book, who may not have opportunity, or inclination, to read the whole. Should any one, by opening these sermons at a venture, meet with a passage, which, by a divine blessing, may either awaken a careless, or heal a wounded spirit, that passage will be exactly in the right page, even though the purport of it should be expressed in several other places. Farther, since we do not always so much stand in need of new information, as to have, what we already know, more effectually impressed upon the mind; there are truths which can scarcely be inculcated too often, at least, until the design, for which they were mentioned *once*, be effectually answered. Thus, when the strokes of a hammer are often repeated, not one of them can be deemed superfluous; the last, which drives the nail to the head,

being

being no lefs neceffary, than any of thofe which preceded it.

From thofe Readers, whofe habits of thinking on religious fubjects, are formed by a clofe attachment to particular fyftems of divinity, the Author requefts a candid conftruction of what he advances, if he ventures, in fome inftances, to deviate a little from the more beaten track. If he is, fometimes, conftrained to differ from the judgment of wife and good men, who have deferved well of the church of God, he would do it with modefty. Far from depreciating their labours, he would be thankful for the benefit which he hopes he has received from them. It is a great fatisfaction to him, that in all doctrinal points of primary importance, his views are confirmed by the fuffrage of writers and minifters eminent for genuine piety, and found learning; who affifted him in his early enquiries after truth, and at whofe feet he is ftill willing to fit. Yet, remembering that he is authorized and commanded to call no man *Mafter*, fo as to yield an implicit and unqualified fubmiffion to human teachers; while he gladly borrows every help he can, from others, he ventures, likewife, to think for him-

himſelf. His leading ſentiments concerning the grand peculiarities of the goſpel, were formed many years ſince, when he was in a ſtate of almoſt entire ſecluſion from ſociety; when he had ſcarcely any religious book, but the Bible, within his reach; and had no knowledge, either of the various names, parties, and opinions, by which, Chriſtians were diſtinguiſhed and divided, or of the controverſies which ſubſiſted among them. He is not conſcious, that any very material difference has taken place in his ſentiments, ſince he firſt became acquainted with the religious world; but, after a long courſe of experience and obſervation, he ſeems to poſſeſs them in a different manner. The difficulties, which, for a ſeaſon, perplexed him, on ſome points, are either removed, or conſiderably abated. On the other hand, he now perceives difficulties, that conſtrain him to lay his hand upon his mouth, in ſubjects, which, once appeared to him obvious and plain. Thus, if he miſtakes not himſelf, he is leſs troubled with ſcepticiſm, and at the ſame time, leſs diſpoſed to be dogmatical, than he formerly was. He feels himſelf unable to draw the line, with preciſion, between thoſe eſſential

points,

points, which ought to be earneſtly contended for (in a ſpirit of meekneſs) as for the faith once delivered to the ſaints; and certain ſecondary poſitions, concerning which, good men may ſafely differ, and wherein, perhaps, we cannot reaſonably expect them to be unanimous, during the preſent ſtate of imperfection. But if the exact boundary cannot be marked with certainty, he thinks it both deſirable and poſſible, to avoid the extremes, into which, men of warm tempers have often been led.

Not that the Author can be an advocate for that indifference to truth, which, under the ſpecious ſemblance of *moderation* and *candour*, offers a comprehenſion, from which none are excluded, but thoſe who profeſs, and aim, to worſhip God in the Spirit, to rejoice in Chriſt Jeſus, and to renounce all confidence in the fleſh. *Moderation*, is a Chriſtian grace. It differs much from that tame, unfeeling neutrality between truth and error, which is ſo prevalent in the preſent day. As the different rays of light, which, when ſeparated by a priſm exhibit the various colours of the rainbow, form, in their combination, a perfect and reſplendent *white*, in which every colour

is

is incorporated; ſo, if the graces of the Holy Spirit were complete in us, the reſult of their combined effect, would be a truly candid, moderate, and liberal ſpirit towards our brethren. The Chriſtian, eſpecially he who is advanced and eſtabliſhed in the life of faith, has a fervent zeal for God, for the honour of his name, his law, and his goſpel. The honeſt warmth which he feels, when ſuch a law is broken, ſuch a goſpel is deſpiſed, and when the great and glorious name of the Lord his God is profaned, would, by the occaſion of his infirmities, often degenerate into anger or contempt, towards thoſe who oppoſe themſelves, if he was under the influence of zeal only. But his zeal is blended with benevolence and humility; it is ſoftened by a conſciouſneſs of his own frailty and fallability. He is aware that his knowledge is very limited in itſelf, and very faint in its efficacy; that his attainments are weak and few, compared with his deficiencies; that his gratitude is very diſproportionate to his obligations, and his obedience unſpeakably ſhort of conformity to his preſcribed rule; that he has nothing but what he has received, and has received nothing, but what, in a greater or leſs degree,

degree, he has misapplied and misimproved. He is, therefore, a debtor to the mercy of God, and lives upon his multiplied forgiveness. And he makes the gracious conduct of the Lord towards himself, a pattern for his own conduct towards his fellow-creatures. He cannot boast, nor is he forward to censure. He considers himself, lest he also be tempted *; and thus he learns tenderness and compassion to others, and to bear patiently with those mistakes, prejudices, and prepossessions *in them*, which once belonged to his own character; and from which, as yet, he is but imperfectly freed. But then, the same considerations, which inspire him with meekness and gentleness, towards those, who, oppose the truth, strengthen his regard for the *truth* itself, and his conviction of its importance. For the sake of peace, which he loves and cultivates, he accommodates himself, as far as he lawfully can, to the weakness and misapprehensions of those who mean well; though he is thereby exposed to the censure of bigots of all parties, who deem him flexible and wavering, like a reed shaken with the wind. But there are other points,

* Gal. vi. 1.

nearly connected with the honour of God, and essential to the life of faith, which are the foundations of his hope, and the sources of his joy. For his firm attachment to these, he is content to be treated as a bigot himself. For here, he is immoveable as an iron pillar, nor can either the fear, or the favour of man, prevail on him to give place, no not for an hour *. Here his judgment is fixed; and he expresses it, in simple and unequivocal language, so as not to leave, either friends or enemies, in suspence, concerning the side which he has chosen, or the cause which is nearest to his heart.

The minister who possesses a candour, thus enlightened, and thus qualified, will neither degrade himself to be the *instrument*, nor aspire to be the *head*, of a party. He will not servilely tread in the paths prescribed him by men, however respectable. He will not multiply contentions, in defence, either of the *shibboleths* of others, or of any *nostrum* of his own, under a pretence that he is pleading for the cause of God, and truth. His attention will not be restrained to the credit, or interest, of any detached denomination of

* Gal. ii. 5.

Chris-

Chriſtians, but extended to all who love the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, in ſincerity. On the other hand, knowing that the goſpel is the wiſdom and power of God, and the only poſſible mean, by which, fallen man can obtain either peace or rectitude, he moſt cordially embraces and avows it. Far from being aſhamed of it, he eſteems it his glory. He preaches Chriſt Jeſus the Lord, and him crucified. He dares not ſophiſticate *, diſguiſe, or ſoften the great doctrines of the grace of God, to render them more palatable to the depraved taſte of the times. He diſdains the thought. And he will no more encounter the prejudices, and corrupt maxims and practices of the world, with any weapon, but *the truth as it is in Jeſus* †, than he would venture to fight an enraged enemy, with a wooden ſword.

Such is the diſpoſition which the Author wiſhes for himſelf, and which, he would endeavour to cultivate in others. He hopes that nothing, of a contrary tendency, will be found in the volumes now preſented to the Public. MESSIAH, the great ſubject of the Oratorio, is the leading and principal ſubject of every ſermon. His perſon, grace, and

* 2 Cor. iv. 2. † Eph. iv. 21.

glory; his matchlefs love to finners; his humiliation, fufferings, and death; his ability and willingnefs to fave to the uttermoft; his kingdom, and the prefent and future happinefs of his willing people; are feverally confidered, according to the order fuggefted by the feries of texts. Nearly connected with thefe topics, are the doctrines of the fall and depravity of man, the agency of the Holy Spirit, and the nature and neceffity of regeneration, and of that holinefs, without which, no man fhall fee the Lord. On thefe fubjects, the Author is not afraid of contradiction, from thofe who are taught of God.

With refpect to fome other points which incidentally occur, he has endeavoured fo to treat them, as to avoid adminiftering fuel to the flame of angry controverfy. He is perfuaded himfelf, and fhall be happy to perfuade his readers, that the remaining differences of opinion, among thofe who truly underftand, and cordially believe the declarations of fcripture, on the preceding articles, are neither fo wide, nor fo important, as they have been fometimes reprefented. Many of thefe differences are nearly verbal, and would ceafe, if due allowance was made for the im-

perfection of human language, and the effects of an accuſtomed phraſeology, which often lead people to affix different ideas to the ſame expreſſions, or to expreſs the ſame ideas in different words. And if, in ſome things, we cannot exactly agree, ſince we confeſs that we are all weak and fallible, mutual patience and forbearance, would be equally becoming the acknowledgments we make, and the goſpel which we profeſs. We ſhould, thereby, act in character, as the followers of him, who was compaſſionate to the infirmities and miſtakes of his diſciples, and taught them, not every thing at once, but gradually, as they were able to bear.

The Author ought not to be very ſolicitous, upon his own account, what reception his performance may meet with. The faſhion of this world is paſſing away. The voice, both of applauſe and of cenſure, will ſoon be ſtifled in the duſt. It is, therefore, but a ſmall thing to be judged of man's judgment *. But conſcious of the vaſt importance of the ſubject, which he thus puts into the Reader's hands, he cannot take leave of him, without earneſtly entreating his ſerious attention.

* 1 Cor. iv. 3.

The one principle, which, he aſſumes for granted, and which, he is certain cannot be diſproved, is, That the *Bible* is *a revelation from God*. By this ſtandard, he is willing, that whatever he has advanced, may be tried. If the Bible be true, we muſt all give an account, each one of himſelf, to the great and final Judge. That when we ſhall appear before his awful tribunal, we may be found at his right hand, accepted in the Beloved, is the Author's fervent prayer, both for his Readers and for himſelf.

LONDON,
15 April, 1786.

CON-

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TO THE

FIRST VOLUME.

valley

saith

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THE TEXTS OF SCRIPTURE, ILLUSTRATED OR QUOTED.

☞ The ſmall Roman numerals and figures refer to the chapter and verſe; the i. and ii. and figures to the volume and page.

2 KINGS.

TEXTS *of* SCRIPTURE *illustrated.*

ISAIAH.

Texts *of* Scripture *illustrated*.

TEXTS *of* SCRIPTURE *illustrated.*

JOHN.

JOHN.

JOHN.

ACTS.

Texts *of* Scripture *illustrated.*

1 Cor-

TEXTS *of* SCRIPTURE *illustrated.*

PHI-

Texts of Scripture *illustrated.*

HEBREWS,

TEXTS *of* SCRIPTURE *illustrated.*

ERRATA.

Page 29. l. 11. for *affected*, r. effected.
Dele *the* before MESSIAH, in p. 36, 38, 39.
Pag. 75. l. 6. for *dreadful*, r. dreadfully.
— 77. for II. r. III.
— 88. l. 24. for *favours*, r. favor.
— 100. l. 12. for *causes*, r. cause.
— 131. l. 11. for *were*, r. are.
— 149. l. 4. for *was born*, r. was to be born.
— 195. l. 14. for *manifest*, r. manifested.
— 285. l. 15. for *effected*, r. affected.
— 303. l. 8. for *overwhelms*, r. overwhelm.

SERMON I.

THE CONSOLATION.

ISAIAH xl. 1, 2.

Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, ſaith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jeruſalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accompliſhed, that her iniquity is pardoned: for ſhe hath received at the Lord's hand double for all her ſins.

THE particulars of the great myſtery of godlineſs as enumerated by the Apoſtle Paul, conſtitute the grand and inexhauſtible theme of the Goſpel Miniſtry, *God manifeſt in the fleſh, juſtified in the Spirit, ſeen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory* *." It is my wiſh and purpoſe to know nothing among you but this ſubject; to preach nothing to you but what has a real connection with the

* 1 Tim. iii. 16.

doctrine of Jesus Christ and him crucified, and with the causes and the effects of his obedience unto death, even the death of the cross. But a regard to the satisfaction and advantage of my stated hearers, has often made me desirous of adopting some plan, which might lead me to exhibit the principal outlines of the Saviour's character and mediation in a regular series of discourses; so as to form, if not a picture, at least a slight sketch, of those features of his glory and of his grace, which endear him to the hearts of his people. Such a plan has lately, and rather unexpectedly, occurred to me. Conversation in almost every company, for some time past, has much turned upon the commemoration of Handel; the grand musical entertainments, and particularly his Oratorio of the *Messiah*, which have been repeatedly performed on that occasion in Westminster Abbey. If it could be reasonably hoped that the performers and the company assembled to hear the music, or the greater part, or even a very considerable part of them, were capable of entering into the spirit of the subject; I will readily allow that the *Messiah*, executed in so masterly a manner, by persons whose hearts,

hearts, as well as their voices and inſtruments, were tuned to the Redeemer's praiſe; accompanied with the grateful emotions of an audience duly affected with a ſenſe of their obligations to his love; might afford one of the higheſt and nobleſt gratifications, of which we are capable in the preſent life. But they who love the Redeemer, and therefore delight to join in his praiſe, if they did not find it convenient, or think it expedient, to hear the *Meſſiah* at Weſtminſter, may comfort themſelves with the thought, that, in a little time, they ſhall be ſtill more abundantly gratified. Ere long death ſhall rend the vail which hides eternal things from their view, and introduce them to that unceaſing ſong and univerſal chorus, which are even now performing before the throne of God and the Lamb. Till then, I apprehend, that true Chriſtians, without the aſſiſtance of either vocal or inſtrumental muſic, may find greater pleaſure in a humble contemplation on the *words* of the *Meſſiah*, than they can derive from the utmoſt efforts of muſical genius. This therefore is the plan I ſpoke of. I mean to lead your meditations to the language of the Oratorio, and to conſider in their order,

 (if

(if the Lord on whom our breath depends ſhall be pleaſed to afford life, ability and opportunity) the ſeveral ſublime and intereſting paſſages of Scripture, which are the baſis of that admired compoſition.

If he ſhall condeſcend to ſmile upon the attempt, pleaſure and profit will go hand in hand. There is no *harmony* to a heaven-born ſoul like that which is the reſult of the combination and coincidence, of all the Divine Attributes and perfections, manifeſted in the work of redemption; mercy and truth meeting together, inflexible righteouſneſs correſponding with the peace of offenders, God glorious, and ſinners ſaved. There is no *melody* upon earth to be compared with the voice of the blood of Jeſus ſpeaking peace to a guilty conſcience, or with the voice of the Holy Spirit applying the promiſes to the heart, and ſweetly inſpiring a temper of confidence and adoption. Theſe are joys which the world can neither give nor take away, which never pall upon the mind by continuance or repetition; the ſenſe of them is always *new*, the recollection of them is always pleaſant. Nor do they only ſatisfy, but ſanctify the ſoul. They ſtrengthen faith, animate

hope, add fervency to love, and both dispose and enable the Christian to run in all the paths of holy obedience with an enlarged heart.

The *Messiah* of Handel consists of three parts. The first, contains prophecies of his advent and the happy consequences, together with the angel's message to the shepherds informing them of his birth, as related by St. Luke. The second part describes his passion, death, resurrection and ascension; his taking possession of his kingdom of glory, the commencement of his kingdom of grace upon the earth, and the certain disappointment and ruin of all who persist in opposition to his will. The third part expresses the blessed fruits and consummation of his undertaking in the deliverance of his people from sin, sorrow and death, and in making them finally victorious over all their enemies. The triumphant song of the redeemed, to the praise of the Lamb, who bought them with his own blood, closes the whole. The arrangement or series of these passages, is so judiciously disposed, so well connected, and so fully comprehends all the principal truths of the Gospel, that I shall not attempt either to alter, or to enlarge it. The exordium or in-

troduction which I have read to you from the prophecy of Isaiah is very happily chosen.

If, as some eminent commentators suppose, the prophet had any reference, in this passage, to the return of Israel from Babylon into their own land, his principal object was undoubtedly of much greater importance. Indeed their deliverance from captivity, and their state afterwards as a nation, do not appear to correspond with the magnificent images employed in the following verses. For though they rebuilt their city and temple, they met with many insults and much opposition, and continued to be a tributary and dependent people. I shall therefore wave the consideration of this sense.

The eye of the prophet's mind seems to be chiefly fixed upon one august Personage, who was approaching to enlighten and bless a miserable world; and before he describes the circumstances of his appearance, he is directed to comfort the mourners in Zion, with an assurance, that this great event would fully compensate them for all their sorrows. The state of Jerusalem, the representative name of the people of God, was very low in Isaiah's time. The people, who in the days of Solo-



Solomon were attached to the ſervice of God, honoured with ſignal tokens of his preſence and favor, and raiſed to the higheſt pitch of temporal proſperity, were now degenerated, the gold was become dim, and the fine gold changed. Iniquity abounded, judgments were impending, yet inſenſibility and ſecurity prevailed, and the words of many were ſtout againſt the Lord. But there were a few who feared the Lord, whoſe eyes affected their hearts, and who mourned for the evils which they could not prevent. Theſe and theſe only were in ſtrictneſs of ſpeech, the people of the Lord, and to theſe the meſſage of comfort is addreſſed. Speak to Jeruſalem comfortably, ſpeak *to her heart* (as the Hebrew word is) to her very caſe, and tell her that there is a balm for all her wounds, a cordial for all her griefs in this one conſideration, MESSIAH is at hand. In the prophetic ſtyle things future are deſcribed as preſent, and that which the mouth of the Lord has ſpoken of as ſure to take place, is conſidered as already done. Thus the prophet rapt into future times contemplates the manifeſtation of MESSIAH, the accompliſhment of his great undertaking, and all the happy conſequences

of his obedience unto death for men, as though he ſtood upon the ſpot, and with John the harbinger of our Lord (whoſe appearance he immediately deſcribes) was pointing with his finger to the Lamb of God that taketh away the ſin of the world.

This comfortable meſſage conſiſts of two parts. Firſt, the removal of evil; her warfare is accompliſhed, her iniquity is pardoned. Secondly, A promiſe of good more than equivalent to all her afflictions; ſhe hath received at the Lord's hand double for all her ſins.

I. Two ideas are included in the original term, tranſlated warfare.

1. A ſtate of ſervice connected with hardſhip, like that of the military life *.

2. An appointed time, as it is rendered in Job †.

Theſe ideas equally apply to the Moſaic diſpenſation. The ſpirit of that inſtitution was comparatively a ſpirit of bondage, diſtance and fear; and the ſtate of the church while under the law, is reſembled by the Apoſtle to that of a minor, who though he be an heir, is under tutors and governors, and differeth but little from a ſervant, until the time appointed

* Numb. i. 3. † Job vii. 1. and xiv. 14.

pointed of the Father *. The ceremonial law with reſpect to its inefficacy is ſtyled *weak*, and with reſpect to the long train of its multiplied, expenſive, difficult and repeated appointments, a *yoke and burden*. But it was only for a preſcribed time. The Goſpel was deſigned to ſuperſede it, and to introduce a ſtate of life, power, liberty and confidence. The blackneſs and darkneſs, the fire and tempeſt, and other circumſtances of terror attendant on the promulgation of the law at Mount Sinai †, which not only ſtruck the people with diſmay, but cauſed even Moſes himſelf to ſay, I exceedingly fear and quake, were expreſſive of its deſign; which was not to lead the people of Iſrael to expect peace and hope from their beſt obedience to that covenant, but rather to convince them of the neceſſity of a better covenant eſtabliſhed upon better promiſes, and to direct their hopes to MESSIAH, who was prefigured by all their ſacrifices, and who in the fulneſs of time was to make a complete atonement for ſin, by the ſacrifice of himſelf. Then their legal figurative conſtitution would ceaſe, the ſhadows give place to the ſubſtance, and the true wor-

* Gal. iv. 1—4. † Heb. xii. 18—22.

ſhippers

ſhippers of God would be inſtructed, enabled and encouraged to worſhip him in ſpirit and in truth; no more as ſervants, but in the temper of adoption, as the children of God by faith in the Son of his love.

There is a conſiderable analogy to this difference between the Law and the Goſpel, as contradiſtinguiſhed from each other, in the previous diſtreſs of a ſinner, when he is made ſenſible of his guilt and danger as a tranſgreſſor of the law of God, and the ſubſequent peace which he obtains by believing the Goſpel. The good ſeed of the word of grace, can only take root and flouriſh in a ſoil duly prepared. And this preparation of the heart *, without which all that is read or heard concerning MESSIAH, produces no permanent good effect, is wholly from the Lord. The firſt good work of the Holy Spirit, upon the heart of fallen man, is to convince of ſin †. He gives ſome due impreſſions of the majeſty and holineſs of the God with whom we have to do, of our dependance upon him, of our obligations to him as our Creator, Lawgiver and Benefactor; then we begin to form our eſtimate of

* Prov. xvi. 1.

† John xvi. 9.

duty, of ſin and its deſert, not from the prevalent maxims and judgment of mankind around us, but from the unerring ſtandard of Scripture. Thence new and painful apprehenſions ariſe—the lofty looks of man are humbled, his haughtineſs is brought low, his mouth ſtopped, or only opened to confeſs his guilt and vileneſs and to cry for mercy. He now feels himſelf under the law, it condemns him and he cannot reply, it commands him and he cannot obey. He has neither righteouſneſs nor ſtrength, and muſt ſink into deſpair, were it not that he is now qualified to hearken to the Goſpel with other ears, and to read the Scriptures with other eyes (if I may ſo ſpeak) than he once did. He now knows he is ſick, and therefore knows his need of a phyſician. This ſtate of anxiety, conflict and fear, which keeps comfort from his heart, and perhaps ſlumber from his eyes, is often of long continuance. There is no common ſtandard whereby to determine either the degree or the duration. Both differ in different perſons; and as the body and the mind have a ſtrong and reciprocal influence upon each other, it is probable the difference obſervable in ſuch caſes

may

may in part depend upon conſtitutional cauſes. However the time, is a preſcribed time, and though not ſubject to any rules or reaſonings of ours, is limited and regulated by the wiſdom of God. He wounds, and he heals in his own appointed moment. None that continue waiting upon him, and ſeeking ſalvation in the means which he has directed, ſhall be finally diſappointed. Sooner or later he gives them, according to his promiſe, beauty for aſhes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praiſe for the ſpirit of heavineſs *. This warfare is accompliſhed, when they rightly underſtand, and cordially believe the following clauſe.

Her iniquity is pardoned. Though the ſacrifices under the law had an immediate and direct effect, to reſtore the offender for whom they were offered, to the privileges pertaining to the people of Iſrael conſidered as a nation or commonwealth, they could not of themſelves cleanſe the conſcience from guilt. It is a dictate of right reaſon, no leſs than of revelation, that is it not poſſible that the blood of bulls and of goats ſhould take away ſin †. For this purpoſe the blood of Chriſt had a

* Iſai. lxi. 3. † Heb. x. 4.

retro-

retroſpective efficacy, and was the only ground of conſolation for a convinced ſinner from the beginning of the world. He was propoſed to our firſt parents as the ſeed of the woman who ſhould break the ſerpent's head *. In this ſeed Abraham believed and was juſtified, and all of every age who were juſtified were partakers of Abraham's faith. Therefore the Apoſtle teaches us, that when God ſet him forth as a propitiation through faith in his blood, he declared his righteouſneſs in the remiſſion of ſins that were paſt †. For though we may ſuppoſe God would have declared his *mercy* in forgiving ſin upon any terms, no conſideration but the death of his Son could have exhibited his *righteouſneſs*—that is his holineſs, juſtice and truth, in the pardon of ſin. True penitents and believers were pardoned and ſaved *under* the law, but not *by* the law. Their faith looked through all the legal inſtitutions to him who was repreſented and typified by them. But the types which revealed him, in a ſenſe concealed him likewiſe. So that though Abraham ſaw his day, and rejoiced, and a ſucceſſion of the ſervants of God foreſaw his

* Gen. iii. 15. † Rom. iii. 25.

glory

glory and his ſufferings and ſpake of him; yet in general the Church of the Old Teſtament rather deſired and longed for, than actually poſſeſſed, that fulneſs of light and knowledge concerning the perſon, offices, love and victory of MESSIAH, which is the privilege of thoſe who enjoy and believe the Goſpel *. Yet great diſcoveries of theſe things were vouchſafed to ſome of the prophets, particularly to Iſaiah, who on account of the clearneſs of his views of the Redeemer and his kingdom, has been ſometimes ſtyled a fifth Evangeliſt. The moſt evangelical part of his prophecy, or at leaſt that part in which he proſecutes the ſubject with the leaſt interruption, begins with this chapter and with this verſe. And he propoſes it for the comfort of the mourners in Zion in his day. *We* know that the Son of God, of whom Moſes and the prophets ſpake, is actually come †. That the atonement for ſin is made, the ranſom for ſinners paid and accepted. Now the ſhadows are paſt, the vail removed, the night is ended, the dawn, the day is arrived, yea the Sun of Righteouſneſs is ariſen, with healing in his beams ‡.

* Heb. xi. 39, 40. † 1 John v. 20. ‡ Mal. iv. 2.

God

God is reconciled in his Son, and the miniſters of the Goſpel are now authorized to preach comfort to all who mourn under a ſenſe of ſin, to tell them all manner of ſin is forgiven for the Redeemer's ſake, and that the iniquity of thoſe who believe in him, is freely and abundantly pardoned.

II. Tho' the laſt clauſe of the verſe does not belong to the paſſage, as ſelected for the Oratorio, it is ſo cloſely connected with the ſubject, that I am not willing to omit it. *She has received at the Lord's hand double for all her ſins.* The meaning here cannot be, that her afflictions had already been more, and greater, than her ſins had deſerved. The juſt deſert of ſin cannot be received in the preſent life, for the wages of ſin is death and the curſe of the law, or in the Apoſtle's words, everlaſting deſtruction from the preſence of the Lord and the glory of his power *. Therefore a living man can have no reaſon to complain under the heavieſt ſufferings. If we acknowledge ourſelves to be ſinners, we have likewiſe cauſe to acknowledge, that he hath not dealt with us according to our iniquities.

* 2 Theſſ. i. 9.

Nor

Nor can the words be ſo applied to MESSIAH as to intimate that even his ſufferings were more than neceſſary, or greater than the exigence of the caſe required. The efficacy of his atonement is indeed greater than the actual application, and ſufficient to ſave the whole race of mankind if they truly believed in the Son of God. We read, that he groaned and bled upon the croſs, till he could ſay, It is finiſhed, but no longer. It becomes us to refer to infinite wiſdom, the reaſons why his ſufferings were prolonged for ſuch a preciſe time; but I think we may take it for granted that they did not endure an hour or a minute longer than was ſtrictly neceſſary. The expreſſion ſeems to be elliptical, and I apprehend the true ſenſe is, that Jeruſalem ſhould receive *bleſſings*, double, much greater, than all the afflictions which ſin had brought upon her. And in general to us, to every believing ſinner, that the bleſſings of the Goſpel are an unſpeakably great compenſation, and overbalance, for all afflictions of every kind with which we have been, or can be exerciſed. Afflictions are the fruit of ſin, and becauſe our ſins have been many, our afflictions may

be

be many. *But where ſin* has *abounded*, *grace has much more abounded* *.

Before our Lord healed the paralytic man who was brought to him, he ſaid, *Be of good cheer, thy ſins are forgiven thee* †. His outward malady rendered him an object of compaſſion to thoſe who brought him; but he appears to have been ſenſible of an inward malady, which only Jeſus could diſcern, or pity, or relieve. I doubt not but his conſcience was burdened with guilt. An aſſurance therefore that his ſins were forgiven, was ſufficient to make him be of good cheer, whether his palſy were removed or not. To this purpoſe the Pſalmiſt ſpeaks abſolutely and without exception. *Bleſſed is the man*, however circumſtanced, *whoſe tranſgreſſion is forgiven, whoſe iniquity is covered* ‡. Though he be poor, afflicted, diſeaſed, neglected or deſpiſed, if the Lord imputeth not his iniquity to him, he is a bleſſed man. There is no ſituation in human life ſo deplorable, but a ſenſe of the pardoning love of God, can ſupport and comfort the ſufferer under it, compoſe his ſpirit, yea make him exceedingly joyful in all his tribulations. For he who feels the power

* Rom. v. 20. † Mark ii. 5. ‡ Pſal. xxxii. 1.

of the blood of Jesus cleansing his conscience from guilt, and giving him access by faith to the throne of grace, with liberty to say Abba, Father; he knows that all his trials are under the direction of wisdom and love, are all working together for his good, and that the heaviest of them are light, and the longest momentary, in comparison of that far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, which is reserved for him in a better world *. Even at present in the midst of his sufferings, having communion with God, and a gracious submission to his will, he possesses a peace that passeth understanding, and which the world can neither give nor take away.

I shall close this preliminary discourse with a few observations, by way of improvement.

1. How justly may we adopt the Prophet's words, *Who is a God like unto thee* †! Behold and admire his goodness! Infinitely happy and glorious in himself, he has provided for the comfort of those, who were rebels against his government, and transgressors of his holy law. What was degenerate Israel, and what are we, that he should thus prevent us with his mercy, remember us in our low estate,

* 2 Cor. iv. 16, 17.   † Micah vii. 18.

and redeem us from mifery, in fuch a way, and at fuch a price! Salvation is wholly of *grace* *; not only undeferved, but undefired by us, till he is pleafed to awaken us to a fenfe of our need of it. And then we find every thing prepared that our wants require, or our wifhes can conceive: yea, that he has done exceedingly beyond what we could either afk or think. Salvation is wholly of the *Lord* †, and bears thofe fignatures of infinite wifdom, power and goodnefs, which diftinguifh all his works from the puny imitations of men. It is every way worthy of himfelf, a great, a free, a full, a fure falvation. It is great, whether we confider the objects miferable and hell-deferving finners; the end, the reftoration of fuch alienated creatures to his image and favor, to immortal life and happinefs; or the means, the incarnation, humiliation, fufferings and death of his beloved Son. It is free, without exception of perfons or cafes, without any conditions or qualifications, but fuch as he himfelf performs in them, and beftows upon them. It is full, including every defirable bleffing; pardon, peace, adoption, protection and guidance through this world, and in the

* Ephef. ii. 5. † Pfal. iii. 8.

world to come eternal life and happineſs, in the unclouded, uninterrupted enjoyment of the favour and love of God, with the perfect and perpetual excluſion of every evil.

2. When the Lord God who knows the human heart would ſpeak comfort to it, he propoſes one object, and only one, as the neceſſary and all-ſufficient ſource of conſolation. This is MESSIAH. Jeſus in his perſon and offices, known and received by faith, affords a balm for every wound, a cordial for every care. If we admit that they who live in the ſpirit of the world, can make a poor ſhift to amuſe themſelves, and be tolerably ſatisfied in a ſtate of proſperity, while every thing goes on according to their wiſh; while we make this conceſſion, (which however is more than we need allow them, for we know that no ſtate of life is free from anxiety, diſappointment, wearineſs and diſguſt) yet we muſt ſtill conſider them as objects of compaſſion. It is a proof of the weakneſs and diſorder of their minds, that they are capable of being ſatisfied with ſuch trifles. Thus if a lunatic conceives his cell to be a palace, that his chains are ornaments of gold, if he calls a wreath of his ſtraw a crown, puts it on his head,

head, and affects the language of majesty— we do not suppose the poor creature to be happy, because he tells us that he is so; but we rather consider his complacence in his situation, as an effect and proof of his malady. We pity him, and if we were able, would gladly restore him to his senses, though we know a cure would immediately put an end to his pleasing delusions. But, I say, supposing or admitting the world could make its votaries happy in a state of prosperity, it will, it must, leave them without resource in the day of trouble. And they are to be pitied indeed, who, when their gourds are withered, when the desire of their eyes is taken from them with a stroke, or the evil which they most feared touches them, or when death looks them closely in the face, have no acquaintance with God, no access to the throne of grace, but being without Christ, are without a solid hope of good hereafter, though they are forced to feel the vanity and inconstancy of every thing here. But they who know MESSIAH, who believe in him, and partake of his spirit, cannot be comfortless. They recollect what he suffered for them, they know that every circumstance and event of life is under his

direction, and designed to work for their good; that though they sow in tears, they shall soon reap in joy; and therefore they possess their souls in patience, and are cheerful, yea comfortable, under those trying dispensations of Providence, which when they affect the lovers of pleasure, too often either excite in them a spirit of presumptuous murmuring against the will of God; or sink them into despondency, and all the melancholy train of evils, attendant on those, who languish and pine away under that depression of spirits, emphatically styled a broken heart.

3. To be capable of the comfort my text proposes, the mind must be in a suitable disposition. A free pardon is a comfort to a malefactor, but it implies guilt; and therefore they who have no apprehension that they have broken the laws, would be rather offended, than comforted, by an offer of pardon. This is one principal cause of that neglect, yea contempt, which the gospel of the grace of God meets with from the world. If we could suppose that a company of people who were all trembling under an apprehension of his displeasure, constrained to confess the justice of the sentence, but not as yet in-

formed

formed of any way to efcape, were to hear this meffage for the firft time, and to be fully affured of its truth and authority, they would receive it as life from the dead. But it is to be feared, that for want of knowing themfelves, and their real ftate in the fight of him with whom they have to do, many perfons, who have received pleafure from the mufic of the *Meffiah*, have neither found, nor expected, nor defired to find, any comfort from the words,

SERMON II.

THE HARBINGER.

ISAIAH xl. 3—5.

The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a high-way for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low, and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain. And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.

THE general style of the Prophecies is poetical. The inimitable simplicity which characterizes every part of divine Revelation, is diversified according to the nature of the subject; and the magnificence and variety of imagery which constitute the life

and

and ſpirit of poetry, evidently diſtinguiſh the ſtyle of the Pſalms, of Iſaiah, and the other poetical books, from that of the hiſtorical, even in the common verſions. The various rules and properties of Hebrew poetry are not, at this diſtance of time, certainly known. But the preſent Biſhop of London, in his elegant and inſtructive lectures on the ſubject, and in the diſcourſe prefixed to his tranſlation of Iſaiah, has fully demonſtrated one property. It uſually conſiſts either of parallel, or contraſted ſentences. The parallel expreſſions (excepting in the book of Proverbs) are moſt prevalent. In theſe the ſame thought, for ſubſtance, expreſſed in the firſt member, is repeated, with ſome difference of phraſe, in the following; which, if it enlarges or confirms the import of what went before, ſeldom varies the idea. Almoſt any paſſage I firſt caſt my eye upon, will ſufficiently explain my meaning. For inſtance in the LIXth chapter of Iſaiah,

℣. 1. *Behold the Lord's hand is not ſhortened, that it cannot ſave,*
Neither is his ear heavy, that it cannot hear.

℣. 9.

℣. 9. *Therefore is judgment far from us,*
Neither doth justice overtake us;
We wait for light, but behold obscurity,
For brightness, but we walk in darkness.

So in chap. LV.

℣. 2. *Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread;*
And your labour for that which satisfieth not?
Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good,
And let your soul delight itself in fatness.

So likewise in Psalm II.

℣. 4. *He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh;*
The Lord shall have them in derision.

℣. 5. *Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath;*
And vex them in his sore displeasure.

These specimens may suffice for my present purpose. The knowledge of this peculiarity of the poetical idiom, may often save us the trouble of enquiring minutely into the meaning of every single word, when one plain, and comprehensive sense, arises from a view of the whole passage taken together. This observation applies to the first of the verses in my text. Though it be true, that John the Baptist lived for a season retired and un-

noticed

noticed in a wilderneſs, and began to preach in the wilderneſs of Judea, the expreſſion, *The voice of him that crieth in the wilderneſs*, does not merely foretell that circumſtance. The verſe conſiſts of two parallels. The prophet rapt into future times, hears a voice proclaiming the approach of MESSIAH, and this is the majeſtic language.

In the wilderneſs prepare ye the way of the Lord;
Make ſtrait in the deſert a highway for our God.

The wilderneſs and the deſert, are the ſame here, as likewiſe in ch. XXXV. where the happy, the ſudden, the unexpected effects of his appearance are deſcribed.—

The wilderneſs and the ſolitary place ſhall be glad,
And the deſert ſhall rejoice, and bloſſom as the roſe.

Now to ſee, by the eye of faith, the glory of the Redeemer in his appearance; to ſee Power divine preparing the way before him; to enter into the gracious and wonderful deſign of his ſalvation; to acknowledge, admire and adore him as the Lord, and humbly to claim him as *our* God, muſt afford a pleaſure, very different from that which the moſt excellent muſic, however well adapted to the words,

words, can poſſibly give. The latter may be reliſhed by a worldly mind; the former is appropriate, and can only be enjoyed by thoſe who are taught of God.

When the Eaſtern monarchs travelled, harbingers went before to give notice that the king was upon the road; and likewiſe proper perſons to prepare his way, and to remove obſtacles. Some of them, (if we may depend upon hiſtory) in the affectation of diſplaying their pomp and power, affected extraordinary things upon ſuch occaſion. For man, though vain, would appear *Wiſe*, though a ſinful worm, he would fain be accounted *Great*. We read of their having actually filled up vallies, and levelled hills to make a commodious road, for themſelves or their armies, through places otherwiſe impaſſable. The prophet thus illuſtrates great things by ſmall, and accommodates the language and uſuages of men to divine truth. MESSIAH is about to viſit a wilderneſs world, and thoſe parts of it which he bleſſes with his preſence, ſhall become the garden of the Lord. Till then it is all deſolate, rocky and wild. But his way ſhall be prepared. Mountainous difficulties ſhall ſink down before

fore him into plains. In defiance of all obſtacles his glory ſhall be revealed in the wilderneſs, and all fleſh ſhall ſee it, for the mouth of the Lord hath ſpoken it.

The leading ideas reſpecting MESSIAH's appearance, ſuggeſted by this ſublime repreſentation, are,

I. The ſtate of the world at his coming—*A wilderneſs.*

II. The preparation of his way. *Every valley ſhall be exalted, and every mountain and hill ſhall be made low.*

III. The manner and effects of his manifeſtation. *And the glory of the Lord ſhall be revealed, and all fleſh ſhall ſee it.*

I. The word *wilderneſs*, I ſuppoſe, generally excites the idea of an intricate, ſolitary, uncultivated, dangerous place. Such is the deſcription Jeremiah gives of that wilderneſs, through which the Lord led Iſrael, when he had delivered them from Egypt. *A land of deſerts and of pits, a land of drought and of the ſhadow of death, a land that no man paſſeth through, and where no man dwelt* *. The world, in which we ſojourn for a ſeaſon, does not appear to us in this unpleaſing view at

* Jer. ii. 6.

firſt.

first. The ſpirit and the things of it, are congenial to our depraved inclinations; and eſpecially in early life, our unexperienced hearts form high expectations from it, and we rather hope to find it a paradiſe, than a wilderneſs. But when the convincing power of the Holy Spirit, opens the eyes of the underſtanding, we awake as from a dream; the enchantment by which we were deluded is broken, and we then begin to judge rightly of the world; that it is a weariſome wilderneſs indeed, and that our only important concern with it, is to get happily out of it. In a ſpiritual view a wilderneſs is a ſignificant emblem of the ſtate of mankind, both Jews and Heathens, at that period which the apoſtle calls the fulneſs of time, when God ſent forth his Son*.

Iſrael, once the beloved people of God, was at that time ſo extremely degenerated, that, a few individuals excepted, the vineyard of the Lord, ſo highly cultivated, ſo ſignally protected, yielded only wild grapes †. Though they were not addicted to imitate the idolatry of the Heathens, as their forefathers had been, they were no leſs alienated from the true God; and their wickedneſs was the more

* Gal. iv. 4. † Iſai. v. 4.

aggravated, for being practised under a professed attachment to the forms of his law. They drew nigh to God with their lips, but their hearts were far from him*. Their very worship profaned the temple in which they gloried, and the holy house of prayer, through their abominations, was become a den of thieves. They owned the divine authority of the Scriptures, and read them with seeming attention, but rendered them of none effect, through the greater attention they paid to the corrupt traditions of their elders. They boasted in their relation to Abraham as their father, but proved themselves to be indeed the children of those, who had persecuted and murdered the prophets †. The Scribes and Pharisees, who sat in the chair of Moses, and were the public teachers of the people, under an exterior garb of sanctity, of prayer and fasting, were guilty of oppression, fraud and uncleanness: and while they trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others, their real character was a combination of pride and hypocrisy. Therefore he who knew their hearts and saw through all their disguises, compared them

* Mark vii. 6. † Matt. xxiii. 30, 31.

to

to painted ſepulchres, fair to outward appearance, but within full of filth and impurity *. From the ſpirit of theſe blind guides we may judge of the ſpirit of the blind people, who held them in admiration, and were willingly directed and led by them. Thus was the faithful city become a harlot, it was once full of judgment; righteouſneſs lodged in it, but now murderers †. Such a wilderneſs was Judea when MESSIAH condeſcended to viſit it.

Among the heathens, ignorance, idolatry, ſenſuality and cruelty univerſally prevailed. Their pretended wiſe men had, indeed, talked of wiſdom and morality from age to age. But their ſpeculations were no more than ſwelling words of vanity, cold, trifling, uncertain, and without any valuable influence, either upon themſelves or upon others. They had philoſophers, poets, orators, muſicians and artiſts, eminent in their way; but the nations reputed the moſt civilized, were overwhelmed with abominable wickedneſs equally with the reſt. The ſhocking effect of their idolatry upon their moral principles and conduct, notwithſtanding their attainments in arts and

* Matt. xxiii. 27. † Iſai. i. 21.

ſcience, is deſcribed by the apoſtle in the cloſe of the firſt chapter of his epiſtle to the Romans. With great propriety therefore the ſtate of the world, both Jew and Gentile, conſidered in a moral view, is compared by the prophet to a wilderneſs—a barren and dreary waſte. The purſuits and practices of the world were diametrically oppoſite to the ſpirit and deſign of that kingdom which MESSIAH was about to ſet up; and therefore, as the event proved, directly diſpoſed to withſtand his progreſs. But

II. Before his appearance a way was prepared for him in the wilderneſs.

The providence of God, by a gradual train of diſpenſations, diſpoſed the political ſtate of mankind in a ſubſerviency to this great event. All the commotions and revolutions which take place in the kingdoms of the earth, are ſo many detached parts of a complicated but wiſely determined plan, of which the eſtabliſhment of MESSIAH's kingdom is the final cauſe. The kings and politicians of the world are not aware of this. God is not in their thoughts. But while they purſue their own ends, and make havock of the peace of mankind, to gratify their own intereſts and

ambition, and look no higher, they are ignorantly and without intention, acting as inſtruments of the will of God. The wrath of man is overruled to his praiſe and his purpoſe *, and ſucceeds ſo far as it is inſtrumental to the accompliſhment of his deſigns, and no farther. While they move in this line, their ſchemes, however injudiciouſly laid, and whatever diſproportion there may ſeem between the means they are poſſeſſed of and the vaſt objects they aim at, proſper beyond their own expectations, but the remainder of their wrath he will reſtrain. Their beſt projected and beſt ſupported enterprizes iſſue in ſhame and diſappointment, if they are not neceſſary parts of that chain of cauſes and events which the Lord of all has appointed. Thus Sennacherib, when ſent by the God whom he knew not, to execute his diſpleaſure againſt the kingdom of Judah, had, for a time, a rapid and uninterrupted ſeries of conqueſts †: but his attempt upon Jeruſalem was beyond the limits of his commiſſion and therefore failed. Among the principal inſtruments who were appointed to prepare a way in the wilderneſs for MESSIAH, and to facilitate the future

* Pſal. lxxvi. 10. † Iſai. xxxvii. 26—29.

ſpread of his kingdom, we may take notice of Alexander; and this deſignation ſecured his ſucceſs, though the extravagancies, exceſſes and raſhneſs, which marked his character, were ſufficient to have rendered his undertakings abortive, had he not been in the hand of the Lord of hoſts, as an ax or a ſaw in the hand of the workman. By his conqueſts the knowledge of the Greek language was diffuſed among many nations; and the Hebrew ſcriptures being ſoon afterwards tranſlated into that language, an expectation of ſome great deliverer was raiſed far and wide, before the MESSIAH appeared. When this ſervice was fulfilled, the haughty preſumptuous worm who had been employed in it, was no longer neceſſary, and therefore was ſoon laid aſide; and all his proud deſigns, for the eſtabliſhment of his own family and dominion, periſhed with him. His empire was divided towards the four winds of heaven, and this diviſion likewiſe contributed to bring forward the purpoſe of God *. For each of the four kingdoms, eſtabliſhed by his ſucceſſors, being thus ſeparated, became a more eaſy prey to the Roman power. This power, which had

* Dan. viii. 8.

been

been gradually increafing and extending in the courfe of feveral hundred years, was at the height about the time of our Lord's birth. The greateft part of the habitable earth which was at that time diftinctly known, was united under one empire, compofed of various kingdoms and governments, which, though once independent and confiderable, were then no more than Roman provinces; and as all the provinces had an immediate connection with Rome, a way was thus prepared, and an intercourfe opened, on every fide, for the promulgation of the gofpel.

Among the Jews, the profeffing people of God, a way was prepared for MESSIAH by the miniftry of his harbinger, John the Baptift, who came in the fpirit and power of Elijah, (as had been foretold of him by the prophets, particularly by the laft of the prophets, Malachi) preaching the baptifm of repentance for the remiffion of fins, and proclaiming that the Saviour and his kingdom were at hand. He who fent him, accompanied his miffion with a divine power. A multitude of perfons, of various defcriptions, were impreffed by his meffage, infomuch that John himfelf feems to have been aftonifhed at the

numbers and charaĉters of thoſe who came to his baptiſm.

When the miniſtry of John had thus previouſly diſpoſed the minds of many for the reception of MESSIAH, and engaged the attention of the people at large, the MESSIAH himſelf entered upon his public office, on the ſame ſcene and among the ſame people. As he increaſed, John willingly decreaſed. So the morning ſtar ceaſes to be ſeen as the ſun advances above the horizon. This diſtinguiſhed ſervant of God having finiſhed his work, was removed to a better world. Not in the triumphant manner in which Elijah was tranſlated, but as he came to announce a new diſpenſation, under which believers were to expeĉt oppoſition and ill treatment, to walk by faith, and frequently to be called to ſeal their teſtimony with their blood, he was permitted to fall a ſacrifice to the revenge of a wanton woman; and though we are aſſured that none of the race of Adam was greater in the eſtimation of God than he, his death was aſked and procured as the reward of an idle dance *.

* Matt. xi. 11. xiv. 8—11.

III.

III. The latter part of my text defcribes the manner and immediate effects of the MESSIAH's appearance during his perfonal miniftry, with an intimation of its future and more extenfive confequences.

The vallies fhall be exalted. A valley is an emblem of a low condition. Such was the condition of moft of our Lord's followers; but his notice and favour exalted them highly. He came to preach the gofpel to the poor, to fill the hungry with good things, to fave the chief of finners, to open a door of hope and falvation to perfons of the vileft and moft defpicable characters in human eftimation. Such, for inftance, was the woman mentioned by the evangelift Luke *. The Pharifee thought our Lord difhonoured himfelf by permitting fuch a one to touch him, nor had fhe a word to fay in her own behalf. But the compaffionate Saviour highly exalted her, when he vouchfafed to plead her caufe, to exprefs his gracious acceptance of her tears and love, and to affure her that her fins, though many, were all forgiven. Very low likewife was the ftate of the malefactor on the crofs; he had committed great crimes,

* Luke vii. 37, 38.

was ſuffering grievous torments, and in the very jaws of death *. But grace viſited his heart, he was plucked as a brand out of the fire, and exalted to paradiſe and glory. The world accounts the proud happy, and honours the covetous if they be proſperous. But true honour cometh from God. They who are partakers of the faith and hope of the goſpel, and have intereſt in the precious promiſes, are, indeed, the rich, the happy, the excellent of the earth, however they may be unnoticed or deſpiſed by their fellow-creatures. The honour of places likewiſe is to be conſidered in this light. Bethlehem, though but of little note among the thouſands of Judah, was rendered more illuſtrious by the birth of MESSIAH, than Babylon or Rome. The Galileans were held in contempt by the inhabitants of Jeruſalem, as a mean and provincial people; but the places in Galilee, which our Lord frequently viſited, or where he ſometimes reſided, are ſpoken of as exalted unto heaven, by the honour and privilege of his preſence, though ſome of them were no more than fiſhing towns. And ſo at this day, if we have ſpiritual diſcernment, we

* Luke xxiii. 42.

ſhall judge, that a little village, where the goſpel is known, prized and adorned by a ſuitable converſation, has a dignity and importance far preferable to all the parade of a wealthy metropolis, if deſtitute of the like privileges.

On the contrary, *Every mountain and hill ſhall be brought low*. MESSIAH came to pour contempt on all human glory. He detected the wickedneſs, and confounded the pride of the Scribes and Phariſees, and rulers; and made it appear, that what is highly eſteemed among men, *το υψηλον*, the ſummit of their boaſted excellency, is worthleſs, yea, abomination in the ſight of God *. And by living himſelf in a ſtate of poverty, and aſſociating chiefly with poor people, he placed the vanity of the diſtinctions and affluence which mankind generally admire and envy, in the moſt ſtriking and humiliating light. Such likewiſe was and will be the effect of his goſpel. When faithfully preached, it is found mighty through God, to the pulling down ſtrong holds, high thoughts, and every ſpecies of ſelf-exaltation. When the convincing word touches the heart, it has an

* Luke xvi. 15.

effect like the hand-writing which Belſhazzar ſaw upon the wall *. In that day the lofty looks of man are humbled, and his haughtineſs bowed down †; he dares no longer plead the goodneſs of his heart, or truſt to the work of his hands. A ſenſe of forgiveneſs and acceptance through the Beloved, received by faith in his atonement, lays him ſtill lower; he now renounces as loſs, for the excellency of the knowledge of Chriſt Jeſus the Lord, all that he once eſteemed his gain, and is glad that he has nothing to truſt or glory in but the croſs ‡. Farther, every mountain that oppoſes the kingdom of MESSIAH, in due time muſt ſink into a plain ‖. Though the nations rage, and the rulers take counſel together, he who ſitteth in the heavens will ſupport and maintain his own work, and all their power and policy ſhall fall before it.

The crooked ſhall be made ſtrait, and the rough places ſmooth. He came to rectify the perverſe diſpoſition of the hearts of men, to ſoften and ſubdue their obſtinate ſpirits, and to form to himſelf a willing people in the day of his power. The Jewiſh teachers, by their tra-

* Dan.v.6. † Iſai.ii.11. ‡ Phil.iii.7,8. ‖ Zech.iv.7.

ditions

ditions and will-worſhip, had given an apparent obliquity to the ſtrait and perfect rule of the law of God, and deformed the beauties of holineſs, binding heavy burdens, and grievous to be borne upon the conſcience; but he vindicated the law from their corrupt gloſſes, and made the path of obedience plain, practicable and pleaſant.

Thus the glory of the Lord was revealed. Not to every eye; many prejudiced by his outward appearance, and by the low miſtaken views the Jews indulged of the office and kingdom of MESSIAH, whom they expected, could ſee no form or excellence in him, that they ſhould deſire him, but his diſciples could ſay, *We beheld his glory* *. He ſpake with authority. His word was power. He controlled the elements, he raiſed the dead. He knew, and revealed, and judged the thoughts of men's hearts. He forgave ſin, and thus exerciſed the rights, and diſplayed the perfections of divine ſovereignty in his own perſon. But the prophecy looks forward to future times. After his aſcenſion he filled his apoſtles and diſciples with light and power, and ſent them forth in all directions

* John i. 14.

to

to proclaim his love and grace to a ſinful world. Then the glory of the Lord was revealed, and ſpread from one kingdom to another people. We ſtill wait for the full accompliſhment of this promiſe, and expect a time when the whole earth ſhall be filled with his glory. For the mouth of the Lord hath ſpoken it. It is to the power of his word that we owe the continuance of day and night, and the regular return of the ſeaſons of the year. But theſe appointments are only for a limited term; the hour is coming, when the frame of nature ſhall be diſſolved. Heaven and earth ſhall paſs away; but not a jot or tittle of what he hath declared concerning his kingdom of grace ſhall fail, till the whole be fulfilled.

Thoſe of you who have heard the *Meſſiah* will do well to recollect, whether you were affected by ſuch thoughts as theſe, while this paſſage was performed; or whether you were only captivated by the muſic, and paid no more regard to the words than if they had no meaning. They are, however, the great truths of God. May they engage your ſerious attention, now they are thus ſet before you!

SER-

SERMON III.

THE SHAKING OF THE HEAVENS AND THE EARTH.

HAGGAI ii. 6, 7.

Thus ſaith the Lord of hoſts, Yet once, it is a little while, and I will ſhake the heavens, and the earth, and the ſea, and the dry land: And I will ſhake all nations, and the deſire of all nations ſhall come, and I will fill this houſe with glory, ſaith the Lord of hoſts.

GOD ſhook the earth when he proclaimed his law to Iſrael from Sinai. The deſcription, though very ſimple, preſents to our thoughts a ſcene unſpeakably majeſtic, grand and awful. The mountain was in flames at the top, and trembled to its baſis *.

* Exod. xix. 16—19.

Dark

Dark clouds, thundrings and lightnings filled the air. The hearts of the people, of the whole people, trembled likewiſe; and even Moſes himſelf ſaid, *I exceedingly fear and quake*. Then, as the apoſtle, referring to this paſſage, obſerves, The voice of the Lord ſhook the earth *. But the prophet here ſpeaks of another, a greater, a more important and extenſive concuſſion. Yet, once a little while and I will ſhake not the earth only, but the heavens.

If we really believe that the ſcriptures are true, that the prophecies were delivered by holy men, who ſpake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit, and that they ſhall all be certainly fulfilled; how ſtudious ſhould we be to attain a right underſtanding of paſſages and events in which we are ſo nearly intereſted, that our hearts may be duly affected by them? But, alas! experience and obſervation ſtrongly confirm the remark of the poet,

Men are but children of a larger growth.

If you put a teleſcope into the hands of a child, he will probably admire the outſide,

* Heb. xii. 26.

eſpe-

eſpecially if it be finely ornamented. But the uſe of it, in giving a more diſtinct view of diſtant objects, is what the child has no conception of. The muſic of the *Meſſiah* is but an ornament of the words, which have a very weighty ſenſe. This ſenſe no muſic can explain, and when rightly underſtood, will have ſuch an effect as no muſic can produce. That the muſic of the *Meſſiah* has a great effect in its own kind, I can eaſily believe. The ancients, to deſcribe the power of the muſic of Orpheus, pretend, that when he played upon his harp, the wild beaſts thronged around him to liſten, and ſeemed to forget their natural fierceneſs. Such expreſſions are figurative, and deſigned to intimate, that by his addreſs and inſtructions, he civilized men of fierce and ſavage diſpoſitions. But if we were to allow the account to be true in the literal ſenſe, I ſhould ſtill ſuppoſe that the wild beaſts were affected by his muſic only while they heard it, and that it did not actually change their natures, and render lions and tigers gentle, as lambs, from that time forward. Thus I can allow, that they who heard the *Meſſiah*, might be greatly impreſſed during the performance; but when it was ended,

ended, I ſuppoſe they would retain the very ſame diſpoſitions they had before it began. And many, I fear, were no more affected by this ſublime declaration of the Lord's deſign to ſhake the heavens and the earth, than they would have been, if the ſame muſic had been ſet to the words of a common ballad.

The Jews when they returned from captivity, and undertook to rebuild the temple of the Lord, met with many diſcouragements. They were diſturbed by the oppoſition and arts of their enemies, who at one time ſo far prevailed, as to compel them, for a ſeaſon, to intermit the work. And when the foundation of the temple was laid, the joy of thoſe who hoped ſoon to ſee the ſolemn worſhip of God reſtored, was damped by the grief of others, who remembered the magnificence of the firſt temple, and wept to think how far the ſecond temple would come ſhort of it *. In theſe circumſtances, the prophets Haggai and Zechariah, were ſent to animate the people by a promiſe, that inferior as the ſecond temple might appear, compared with that which Solomon built, the glory of the latter houſe ſhould be greater than the glory of the

* Hag. ii. 3.

for-

former *. Had this depended upon a profusion of filver and gold, the Lord could have provided it, for *the filver is mine, and the gold is mine, faith the Lord of hofts.* But the glory fpoken of was of a different kind. The prefence of MESSIAH in the fecond temple, would render it far more honourable and glorious, though lefs pompous than the temple of Solomon; and would be attended with greater confequences, than even the manifeftation of the God of Ifrael on Mount Sinai. Then he only fhook the earth; but under the fecond temple, he would fhake the heavens and the earth, the fea and the dry land, to introduce the kingdom of MESSIAH.

We may confider from the words,

I. A character of MESSIAH. *The defire of all nations.*

II. The effects of his appearance. *Shaking the heavens and the earth.*

III. *His filling the houfe with glory.* This clofe of ver. 7. is not in the paffage fet to mufic, but as it is an eminent part of the prophecy I fhall not exclude it.

* Ezra iii. 12, 13.

I. MESSIAH is ftyled, *The Defire of all nations.* The propriety of this title may be illuftrated by two confiderations.

1. Before he came into the world to fave finners, an expectation prevailed in many nations that a great deliverer and friend of mankind was at hand. This was, perhaps, partly the effect of fome ancient traditions founded on the promifes of God refpecting the feed of the woman, the traces of which, though much corrupted by the addition of fables, were not worn out—but might be chiefly owing to feveral difperfions of the people of Ifrael, and imperfect notices derived from the fcriptures in their hands. The fenfe of many prophecies concerning MESSIAH, though mifapplied, is remarkably expreffed in a fhort poem of Virgil, written a few years before our Saviour's birth. This eclogue, of which we have a beautiful imitation in our own language, by Mr. Pope, affords a fufficient proof that the heathens had an idea of fome illuftrious perfonage, who would fhortly appear and reftore peace, profperity, and all the bleffings of their imaginary golden age to mankind. The miferies and evils with which the world was filled, made the interpofition

pofition of fuch a deliverer highly defirable. There were even a few among the heathens, fuch as Socrates and his immediate difciples, who feem to have felt the neceffity of a divine teacher; and to be fenfible that man, in a ftate of nature, was too depraved, and too ignorant, to be either able or difpofed to worfhip God acceptably, without one. There is reafon to believe, that the Revelation which we enjoy, though defpifed by too many who affect to be called philofophers in modern times, would have been highly prized by the wifeft and beft of the philofophers of antiquity. Socrates thought men were not capable of knowing and expreffing their own wants, nor of afking what was good for themfelves, unlefs it fhould pleafe God to fend them an inftructor from heaven, to teach them how to pray. And therefore,

2. The need that all nations had of fuch a Saviour, is fufficient to eftablifh his right to this title, admitting they had no knowledge or expectation of him. If we could fuppofe a nation involved for ages in the darknefs of night, though they had no previous notion of light, yet light might be faid *to be* their defire, becaufe the light, whenever

they ſhould enjoy it, would put an end to their calamity, would anſwer their wants, and in that ſenſe accompliſh their wiſhes; for if they could not directly wiſh for light, they would naturally wiſh for relief. The heathens were miſerably bewildered. They had a thirſt for happineſs, which could not be ſatisfied by any or all the expedients and purſuits within their reach. They had fears and forebodings of conſcience for which they knew no remedy. They were ſo ſenſible, both of their guilt and their weakneſs, that being ignorant of the character of the true God, and of that forgiveneſs which is with him, in times of extremity they frequently offered the moſt expenſive ſacrifices to the objects of their idolatrous ſuperſtition, even the blood and lives of their children *. When MESSIAH appeared, as he was the glory of Iſrael, ſo he was a light to the Gentiles, as we ſhall have opportunity of obſerving more at large hereafter. He therefore who came purpoſely to bleſs the nations by turning them from darkneſs to light, and from the worſhip of dumb idols to ſerve the living and true God, may juſtly be called their *deſire*,

* Micah vi. 6.

though,

though, in the time of their ignorance, they could form no ſuitable conception of him.

II. *I will ſhake the heavens and the earth.* This part of the prophecy has been, in a meaſure, literally fulfilled. At his birth a new ſtar appeared. At his death the ſun withdrew his ſhining, the earth quaked, the rocks rent, and the dead aroſe. During his life he often ſuſpended and overruled the ſtated laws of nature, and exerciſed ſupreme power over the viſible and inviſible worlds. He ſhook the kingdom of darkneſs, ſpoiled principalities and powers, triumphing over them by his croſs. He ſhook the kingdoms of the earth; the idols trembled and diſappeared before his goſpel, till at length the Roman empire renounced heatheniſm, and embraced the chriſtian name.

But the language of prophecy is highly figurative. Mountains and trees, land and water, ſun and moon, heaven and earth, often ſignify nations, people and governments. And particularly heaven and earth are uſed to denote the religious and political eſtabliſhment of Iſrael; or, as we ſay, their conſtitution in church and ſtate. This without doubt is the primary ſenſe here. The ap-

pearance of MESSIAH ſhall be connected with the total diſſolution of the Jewiſh œconomy. The whole of their Levitical inſtitution was fulfilled, ſuperſeded and abrogated by MESSIAH, which was ſolemnly ſignified, by the rending of the vail of the temple from the top to the bottom at his death. And, a few years afterwards, the temple itſelf was deſtroyed. By which event, the worſhip of God, according to the law, of which the temple ſervice was an eſſential part, was rendered utterly impracticable. Their civil ſtate likewiſe was diſſolved, they were extirpated from the promiſed land, and diſperſed far and wide among the nations of the earth. Though in one ſenſe they are preſerved by the wonderful providence of God, as a diſtinct people, unaffected by the changes and cuſtoms around them: in another ſenſe they are not a people, having neither ſettlement nor government, but living as ſtrangers and foreigners in every country where their lot has been caſt *. Nothing like this can be found in the hiſtory of mankind. It is an obvious, ſtriking, and perpetual proof of the truth of the ſcriptures. What was foretold concern-

* Hoſea iii. 4.

ing them by Mofes and the fucceeding prophets, is accomplifhed to a demonftration before our eyes. How unlikely was it once that it fhould be thus! yet thus it muft be, becaufe the mouth of the Lord has fpoken it. And all that he has fpoken is equally fure. He will yet again fhake the heavens and the earth, diffolve the frame of nature, and execute his threatened judgments upon all thofe who do not receive and obey his gofpel.

III. *He fhall fill this houfe with glory.* He did fo when he condefcended to vifit it in perfon. The blind and the lame came thither to him and he healed them *. Children felt his power, and fung hofanna to the Son of David, a title appropriate to MESSIAH; and when the Pharifees rebuked them, he faid, *If thefe fhould hold their peace the ftones would cry out* †. As the Lord in his own houfe, he purged the temple, and drove out thofe who profaned it, and not one of his enemies durft offer the leaft refiftance to his will. And when he left it the laft time, with fovereign authority, he denounced that awful fentence, which was foon afterwards executed, by the Romans, both upon the temple and the

* Matt. xxi. 15, 16. † Luke xix. 40.

nation *. His glory filled the temple when he was an infant, ſo that Simeon and Anna then acknowledged his character, and ſpake of him to thoſe who were waiting for the conſolation of Iſrael †. Eſpecially his glory was manifeſted when he proclaimed himſelf the fountain of life, and invited every thirſty weary ſinner to come to him, to drink and live for ever ‡.

The temple of Jeruſalem has been long ſince deſtroyed. But he has ſtill a houſe, *a houſe not made with hands*. This is his church, comprizing all the members of his myſtical body. He dwells in each of them individually; he dwells in and among them collectively. Where two or three are met in his name, where his ordinances are adminiſtered and prized, where his goſpel is faithfully preached and cordially received, there he is preſent in the midſt of them. There his glory is ſeen, his voice heard, his power felt, his goodneſs taſted, and the ſavour of his name is diffuſed as a precious ointment, which refreſhes the hearts of his people, renews their ſtrength, and comforts them under all their ſorrows and cares. The glory and

* Matt. xxiii. 37. † Luke ii. 25, 38. ‡ John vii. 37.

magnificence of the temple worſhip, even in the days of Solomon, was faint, compared with the glory diſplayed to the hearts of believers, who worſhip him in ſpirit and truth, under the New Teſtament diſpenſation. But it can only be perceived by an enlightened and ſpiritual mind. To outward appearance all may be low and humiliating. The malice of their enemies has often conſtrained his people to aſſemble in woods and on mountains, in places under ground; or, in the dead of the night, to ſecrete themſelves from informers. But vaulted roofs, and coſtly garments, the ſolemn parade of proceſſions, muſic and choriſters, and the preſence of nobles and dignitaries, are not neceſſary to conſtitute the glory of goſpel worſhip. It is enough that he, in whoſe name they meet, condeſcends to viſit them with the power and influence of his Spirit, to animate and hear their prayers, to feed them with the good word of his grace, and to fill them with joy and peace in believing. If they have theſe bleſſings they deſire no more, they are compenſated for all their difficulties and hardſhips; and however unnoticed and deſpiſed by the world, they can ſay, *This is none other than the houſe of God,*
this

this is the gate of heaven *. For they approach by faith to the city of the living God, the Jerusalem which is above, to the worship which is carried on day without night, by the innumerable company of angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect †.

But every member of this mystical temple, being by nature afar off from God, experiences a previous change which may be not unfitly described by the terms of my text. Before the Lord takes possession of his people, and in order to it, *He shakes the heavens and the earth.* Their former views of God and of themselves, are altered by a light which penetrates the soul. All that they have been building in religion, till then, is shaken and overturned. Their vain hopes are shaken to the foundation. This concussion makes way for the perception of his glory as a Saviour. In this day of his power they are made willing to throw open the gates of their hearts, that the king of glory may enter.

But as I do not stand here to amuse you with a declamation on a subject in which you are not immediately interested, and as my office as a preacher both warrants and requires

* Gen. xxviii. 17. † Heb. xii. 22.

me

me to addrefs myfelf not only to your underftandings, but likewife to your confciences, I muft be allowed, before I conclude, to propofe this queftion to your confideration. Is MESSIAH, the defire of all nations, the object of your chief defire? How much depends upon the anfwer? Do you wifh to know your prefent ftate in the fight of God? If you are faithful to yourfelves you may be fatisfied, provided you will abide by the decifion of the fcripture. God is well-pleafed *in* his Son; if you are well pleafed *with* him, if he is precious to you, and the defire of your foul is fupremely directed to him, then you affuredly poffefs the beginning, the fore-tafte and the earneft of eternal life. If you fo enter into the defcriptions given in the Bible, of his perfon, love, office and glory, as to place your whole dependence upon him, to devote yourfelves fimply to him, and to place your happinefs in his favour, then you are happy indeed! Happy, even at prefent, though not exempted from a fhare in the afflictions incident to this mortal ftate. For your fins are pardoned, your perfons are accepted in the Beloved; to you belong the promifes of guidance, protection and fupply through life,

life, victory over death, and then a crown of glory which fadeth not away. To say all, in a few words, God is your Father, and heaven is your home.

But on the other hand, If you trust in yourself that you are righteous and good, at least comparatively so; if your attachment to the business or the pleasure of the world engrosses your thoughts and application, so that you have no leisure to attend to the record which God has given of his Son, or no relish for the subject, you have been hitherto guilty of treating the most glorious display of the wisdom and goodness of God with contempt. Many persons thus employed and thus disposed, bear respectable characters in civil life, from which I do not wish to detract. But however amiable you may be in the judgment of your fellow-creatures, you are a sinner in the sight of God, and will be treated by him as an enemy to his government and glory, if you finally persist in a rejection of his gospel. The great point which will determine your state for eternity, will be this, What think you of Christ? For it is written, *If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him*

him be Anathema Maranatha *. He muſt and will fall under the curſe and condemnation of the law, and be puniſhed with everlaſting deſtruction from the preſence of the Lord, and the glory of his power. To day, therefore, while it is called to day (for to-morrow is not ours) may you hear his voice, and flee for refuge to the hope ſet before you!

* 1 Cor. xvi. 22.

SER-

SERMON IV.

THE LORD COMING TO HIS TEMPLE.

MALACHI iii. 1—3.

The Lord, whom ye ſeek, ſhall ſuddenly come to his temple; even the meſſenger of the covenant in whom ye delight: Behold, he ſhall come, ſaith the Lord of hoſts. But who may abide the day of his coming? and who ſhall ſtand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner's fire, and like fuller's ſope—And he ſhall purify the ſons of Levi—that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteouſneſs.

WHEREUNTO *ſhall we liken the people of this generation, and to what are they like* *? I repreſent to myſelf a number of perſons of various characters, involved in one common charge of high treaſon. They

* Luke vii. 31.

are

are already in a ſtate of confinement, but not yet brought to their trial. The facts, however, are ſo plain, and the evidence againſt them ſo ſtrong and pointed, that there is not the leaſt doubt of their guilt being fully proved, and that nothing but a pardon can preſerve them from puniſhment. In this ſituation, it ſhould ſeem their wiſdom, to avail themſelves of every expedient in their power for obtaining mercy. But they are entirely regardleſs of their danger, and wholly taken up with contriving methods of amuſing themſelves, that they may paſs away the term of their impriſonment with as much chearfulneſs as poſſible. Among other reſources, they call in the aſſiſtance of muſic. And amidſt a great variety of ſubjects in this way, they are particularly pleaſed with one. They chuſe to make the ſolemnities of their impending trial, the character of their judge, the methods of his procedure, and the awful ſentence to which they are expoſed, the groundwork of a muſical entertainment. And, as if they were quite unconcerned in the event, their attention is chiefly fixed upon the ſkill of the compoſer, in adapting the ſtyle of his muſic, to the very ſolemn language and ſub-

ject with which they are trifling. The king, however, out of his great clemency and compassion towards those who have no pity for themselves, prevents them with his goodness. Undesired by them, he sends them a gracious message. He assures them that he is unwilling they should suffer: he requires, yea, he entreats them to submit. He points out a way in which their confession and submission shall be certainly accepted; and in this way, which he condescends to prescribe, he offers them a free and a full pardon. But instead of taking a single step towards a compliance with his goodness, they set his message likewise to music; and this, together with a description of their present state, and of the fearful doom awaiting them if they continue obstinate, is sung for their diversion, accompanied with the sound of cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer, and all kinds of instruments *. Surely, if such a case as I have supposed could be found in real life, though I might admire the musical taste of these people, I should commiserate their insensibility!

* Dan. iii. 5.

But is not this case more than a supposition? Is it not in the most serious sense actually realized amongst ourselves? I should insult your understandings, if I judged a long application necessary. I know my supposition *must* already have led your thoughts to the subject of the *Messiah*, and to the spirit and temper of at least the greater part of the performers, and of the audiences. The holy scripture concludes all mankind under sin *. It charges them all with treason and rebellion against the great sovereign Lawgiver and Benefactor; and declares the misery to which, as sinners, we are obnoxious. But God is long-suffering and waits to be gracious. The stroke of death, which would instantly place us before his awful tribunal, is still suspended. In the mean time he affords us his gospel, by which he assures us there is forgiveness with him. He informs us of a Saviour, and that of his great love to sinners, he has given his only Son to be an atonement and mediator, in favour of all who shall sue for mercy in his name. The character of this Saviour, his unspeakable love, his dreadful sufferings, the agonies he endured in Gethsemane, and

* Rom. iii. 9.

upon

upon the crofs, are made known to us. And as his paft humiliation, fo his prefent glory, and his invitation to come to him for pardon and eternal life, are largely declared. Thefe are the principal points expreffed in the paffages of the *Meffiah*. Mr. Handel, who fet them to mufic, has been commemorated and praifed, many years after his death, in a place profeffedly devoted to the praife and worfhip of God; yea, (if I am not mif-informed) the ftated worfhip of God, in that place, was fufpended for a confiderable time, that it might be duly prepared for the commemoration of Mr. Handel. But, alas! how few are difpofed to praife and commemorate MESSIAH himfelf! The fame great truths, divefted of the mufic, when delivered from the pulpit, are heard by many admirers of the oratorio with indifference, too often with contempt.

Having thus, as I conceived myfelf bound in duty, plainly and publickly delivered my fentiments, of the great impropriety of making the fundamental truths of chriftianity, the fubject of a public amufement, I leave what I have faid to your ferious reflections, hoping it will not be forgotten; for I do not mean

to trouble you often with a repetition of it. Let us now consider the passage before us. If you read it with attention, and consider the great ideas it suggests, and the emphatical language with which they are clothed, you will not, perhaps, think the manner of my introducing it wholly improper.

Malachi confirms and unites the prophecies of Isaiah and Haggai, which were the subject of our two last discourses. John is the messenger, spoken of in the beginning of the first verse, sent to prepare the way of the Lord. *Then the Lord himself shall come suddenly to his temple*, that is, immediately after the appearance of his fore-runner, and with regard to the people in general, unexpectedly.

The question, *Who may abide the day of his coming?* intimates the greatness and solemnity of the event. If we take his coming in an extensive sense to denote the whole of his sojourning upon earth, from his incarnation to his ascension, it is unspeakably the greatest of all events recorded in the annals of mankind; and though he lived in the form of a servant, and died the death of a malefactor, the vast consequences which depend upon his appearance under these humiliating circumstances,

ſtances, rendered it a manner of coming every way worthy of himſelf. It afforded a more awful diſcovery of the majeſty, glory, and holineſs of God, than was diſplayed upon Mount Sinai, and proved a cloſer and more ſearching appeal to the hearts and conſciences of men. To enter more into the ſpirit and meaning of the queſtion here propoſed, we ſhall briefly take notice of the following points which the words offer to our ſerious meditation. May the Holy Spirit, whoſe office it is to glorify the Saviour, enlighten our hearts to underſtand them, with application to ourſelves!

I. The *names* which are here aſcribed to MESSIAH.

II. The ſuddenneſs of his coming.

III. The ſearching power of it in general, expreſſed *by a refiner's fire* and *by fuller's ſope.*

IV. Its purifying power *on the ſons of Levi*, the prieſthood in particular.

I. The names aſcribed to the MESSIAH.

The Lord. It is a general rule with our tranſlators to expreſs LORD in capital letters, where it anſwers to Jehovah, in the Hebrew, and there only. But this place is an exception. The word here is not Jehovah, but Adonai. It is,

however, a name of God, though not incommunicable like the other, being frequently applied to kings and ſuperiors. It properly implies authority and rule. As we ſay, *A Lord and Maſter*. In this connection it is undoubtedly a divine name. The Lord is ſaid to come to his temple, to his own temple. It was a houſe conſecrated to the God of Iſrael. The firſt temple he honoured with tokens of his preſence; the ſecond, he viſited in perſon; on which account it exceeded the firſt in glory. MESSIAH, therefore, who appeared in our nature, and was known amongſt men, as a man, and who is now worſhipped both in heaven and upon earth, is the God of Iſrael. *He came to his own.* This doctrine of God manifeſt in the fleſh, is the pillar and ground of truth: the only foundation on which a ſinner, who knows the juſt deſert of his ſin, can build a ſolid hope of ſalvation, is, that Jeſus Chriſt *is the true God and eternal life**. Unleſs this be admitted, the whole tenor, both of the Old and New Teſtament, is unintelligible. To ſay that this doctrine approves itſelf to human reaſon in its preſent fallen depraved ſtate, would be to contradict

* 1 John v. 20.

the

the apoſtle, who aſſerts, *that no man can ſay that Jeſus Chriſt is Lord but by the Holy Ghoſt* *. But it is highly reaſonable, to thoſe who ſee that they muſt periſh, without ſuch an atonement as ſhall declare the righteouſneſs of God, no leſs than his mercy, in the forgiveneſs of ſin; who feel the neceſſity of holineſs, in order to happineſs; and are acquainted with the nature and variety of the ſnares, temptations, and enemies to which they are expoſed. Such perſons cannot venture their eternal concerns upon the dignity, or care, or power, or patience of a meer creature, however exalted and excellent; they muſt be aſſured, that their Saviour is Almighty, or they dare not truſt in him: nor would they dare to honour the Son as they honour the Father, to love him with all their heart and ſoul and ſtrength, to devote themſelves abſolutely to his ſervice, and to expect their ſupreme happineſs from his favour and approbation, if they did not know that he is over all, God bleſſed for ever.

With reſpect to the inferior character he ſuſtains in our nature and for our ſakes, as the Father's ſervant, he is ſtyled, *The Meſſenger*

* 1 Cor. xii. 3.

of the covenant. He is the gift, promiſe, head and ſubſtance of the everlaſting covenant. And he came himſelf to eſtabliſh the covenant, and to declare and beſtow the bleſſings it contained. *God who had before ſpoken at divers times and in ſundry manners by his prophets, ſpoke in the fulneſs of time by his Son* *; teſtifying to him by a voice from heaven, *This is my beloved Son, hear him, in him I am well pleaſed* †. To the ſame purpoſe our Lord ſpake of himſelf. He prefaced his gracious invitation to all, without exception, who are weary and heavy laden, to come to him for reſt ‡, with a declaration of his commiſſion and authority, ſaying, *All things are delivered unto me of my Father, and no one* (ουδεις) *knoweth the Son but the Father, neither knoweth any one the Father, ſave the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal him.* The law was given by Moſes ||; the moral law to diſcover the extent and abounding of ſin; the ceremonial law, to point out by typical ſacrifices and ablutions, the way in which forgiveneſs was to be ſought and obtained. But *grace*, to relieve us from the condemnation of the one, and *truth* anſwerable to the

* Heb.i.1. † Matt.iii.17. ‡ Matt.xi.27. || John i.17.

types

types and ſhadows of the other, came by Jeſus Chriſt.

It is farther ſaid, *The Lord whom ye ſeek*, and *the Meſſenger in whom ye delight* — MESSIAH was the hope and deſire of the true Iſrael of God, from the earlieſt times; and when he was born into the world, there was a prepared people waiting and longing for him, as their conſolation. The people at large likewiſe profeſſed to expect great things from the coming of MESSIAH. But their expectations were low and earthly. They ſuppoſed that he would deliver them from the Roman yoke, and give them victory and power over the Heathen nations. The more grievous bondage of ſin under which they were enſlaved, they were not ſenſible of, nor had they had a diſpoſition ſuited to the privileges and honours of the kingdom which he deſigned to eſtabliſh; and therefore, their underſtandings being darkened by prejudice and prepoſſeſſion, they could not diſcern his character. The prophecies which were read in their ſynagogues every ſabbath, marked out the time and circumſtances of MESSIAH'S appearance, the places which he ſhould principally viſit, the doctrine he ſhould teach,

with a clamorous importunity, to compel Pilate to put him to death. The like misapprehensions produce the like effects among professed Christians at this day. *We* likewise have the scriptures, but how many who admit their authority in words, live willingly ignorant of their contents, and act in direct contradiction to their tenor! The power of the Saviour is likewise displayed among us: his preached gospel is daily made effectual to the great purposes for which it is vouchsafed, yet multitudes reject it with no less pertinacity, than the Jews rejected him in person. At length death surprizes them, and they sink into darkness beyond recall. To them, the Lord may be said to come suddenly, for they think not of him till they actually find themselves at his tribunal. And this, not only when they are cut off by a sudden stroke, but often when their dissolution is most gradual, and every one about them can perceive its approach by their countenances; they themselves, though wasting with disease, and worn out with pain, still flatter themselves with hopes of amendment and recovery to their last gasp; and a lingering death is, to them, no less sud-

ſudden than if they were killed by a flaſh of lightning.

II. It is aſked, *Who may abide the day of his coming?* The effect is compared to a refiner's fire, and to fuller's ſope. The refiner's fire penetrates the metal, and thereby ſearches, diſcovers, and conſumes the droſs. The fuller's ſope alſo, though it does not deſtroy the texture of the cloth, cleanſes it by removing, and as it were conſuming the ſpots and defilement which are found in it. The idea conveyed by theſe illuſtrations is the ſame. The day of his coming is a day of trial, a trial which iſſues in the purification of the work of God in his church, and in the detection and deſtruction of every thing in it which is contrary to his will.

The coming of MESSIAH may be taken in ſeveral ſenſes.

To the Jews, according to the promiſe of God repeated from age to age, he came in perſon. *The Word was made fleſh and dwelt among them* *. The term in the original alludes to the viſible ſymbol of the divine preſence, which reſided in the tabernacle and temple. Thus for a ſeaſon he reſided among them, in

* John i. 14.

a temple not made with hands, but formed, by the immediate agency of the Holy Spirit, in the womb of a virgin. This was a happy time to thofe who received and acknowledged him. But the bulk of the nation could not abide the trial which his appearance expofed them to, they were proved by it to be but reprobate and counterfeit filver. The thoughts of many hearts were revealed *. Many fpecious characters were detected. The pretended fanctity and outward ftrictnefs of the Scribes and Pharifees, was evidenced to be meer hypocrify. He expofed them in their true colours, and upon many occafions put them to fhame and to filence. And where his word did not cleanfe like fope, it burnt like fire, and the perfons and places that rejected him, were rendered inexcufable. Their great privilege of feeing his wonderful works, and hearing his gracious words, being abufed, aggravated their guilt and condemnation, and made their doom heavier than that of Sodom and Gomorrah. To them the day of the Lord, which in their own fenfe they profeffed to defire, was darknefs and not light †. If he had not come and fpoken to them himfelf,

* Luke ii. 35. † Amos v. 18.

they

they had not had ſin *. That is, comparatively; he found them great ſinners, and they would have been ſuch if he had not viſited them. But after he had ſpoken to them, and ſpoken in vain, they had no cloke for their ſin. From that time they were depriv-ed of every ſhadow of plea, excuſe, or extenuation. And all their former wickedneſs was light, compared with the enormous crime they were guilty of in rejecting and crucifying the Son of God. By refuſing him, they rendered their caſe helpleſs and hopeleſs, becauſe there is no other name but his, given among men, whereby they may be ſaved. But he cleanſed thoſe who received him, he removed their guilt, their fears, their ignorance. He gave them a clean heart and a new ſpirit. Yet to theſe alſo he was as a refiner's fire, and as fuller's ſope. They likewiſe had prejudices and ſelfiſh tempers, which were not at once removed. He called them to a ſtate of ſuffering and ſelf-denial, to forſake all, and to take up their croſs daily for his ſake.

In another ſenſe, his coming is not reſtrained to a particular time. Wherever his

* John xv. 22.

gofpel is preached, the Lord is come. It is by the gofpel he rides forth profperoufly, conquering and to conquer *. Thus he has promifed to be prefent with his minifters, *and wherever two or three are met in his name*, to the end of the world. Thus he is come to us. And the effects are the fame, as when he was perfonally upon earth. His gofpel ftill difcovers the thoughts of many hearts. Many perfons who till then were reputed religious, by the contempt they caft upon this wonderful expedient of infinite wifdom and love to fave finners, manifeft their ignorance and hatred of the law and holinefs of God, and that the religion they pretend to is an empty lifelefs form, deftitute of love and power. To them, though in itfelf a favor of life, it proves a favor of death. It provokes their enmity, increafes their obduracy, and leaves them without excufe. But it is life indeed to thofe who receive it. They are raifed by it from a death of fin, unto a life of righteoufnefs and peace. Their tempers, defires, purfuits, and hopes are changed and elevated. Old things pafs away, and all things become new to them, according as it

* Pfal. xlv. 4.

is written, *If any man be in Christ Jesus, he is a new creature* *.

He comes to individuals by the power of his Spirit. This makes the word of his gospel effectual. For the kingdom of God is not in word only, but in power. When he thus visits the hearts of sinners, his word is like fire and sope; *quick and powerful, sharper than a two-edged sword* †. Then they feel and tremble, and cry out with the prophet, *Wo is me, I am undone*. But in this way their dross is consumed, their defilement removed. When he thus wounds, he likewise heals. He gives them faith; by faith they look unto him, and are enlightened and saved.

We surely expect that he will come again. Not as he once came, in a state of humiliation. The Babe of Bethlehem, the Man of Sorrows, who hung, and bled, and died upon the cross for our sins, will return in glory. *Behold he cometh in the clouds, and every eye shall see him* ‡. Concerning this day, emphatically called the day of the Lord, we may well say, *Who may abide it?* To those who have not been the subjects of his refining

* 2 Cor. v. 17. † Heb. iv. 12. ‡ Rev. i. 7.

operations here, he will then be a consuming fire. That great day (for which all other days were made) *when the Lord shall descend with the voice of the archangel and the trump of God, will burn like an oven, and all the proud, and all that do wickedly shall be as stubble,* and the day that cometh *shall burn them up* *. Where then shall the impeninent ungodly sinner appear? But it will be a joyful day to them that love his appearing. He will arise upon them, as the Sun of Righteousness, with healing on his wings; he will wipe away their tears, vindicate their characters, acknowledge them before the assembled world, and say unto them, *Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you* †.

IV. It is particularly said, *He will purify the sons of Levi*, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness. *The sons of Levi*, the priests, the officiating ministers of God *were gone out of the way, and had corrupted the covenant of the Lord, and thereby had caused many to stumble* ‡; they dishonoured their office, and became themselves vile and contemptible. Thus they went on from bad to worse, till the men of that generation

* Mal. iv. 1. † Matt. xxv. 34. ‡ Mal. ii. 8, 9.

filled

filled up the meaſure of the iniquity of their forefathers, by the rejection of MESSIAH. He alſo rejected them. The blaſted barren fig-tree *, which withered to the very root at his word, was an emblem of their condition. In a little time, wrath came upon them to the uttermoſt; they ſaw the temple in which they had truſted, and which they had profaned, deſtroyed by fire, and the greater part of them periſhed. But a remnant of them was purified. We read, that after his aſcenſion, a great company of the prieſts were obedient to the faith †. And his apoſtles and diſciples were ſent forth with a new ſpirit, and in a new character, to offer and to ſerve in righteouſneſs. The purport of this paſſage has been repeatedly exemplified under the Chriſtian diſpenſation. A declenſion from the ſimplicity and purity of worſhip, principles, and morals, was viſible very early in the church. The progreſs of it was rapid, eſpecially from the time of Conſtantine. When perſecution ceaſed, and a tide of wealth and worldly honours flowed in upon thoſe who by their profeſſion, were bound to be patterns of humility and ſelf-denial to others;

* Matt. xxi. 19. † Acts vi. 7.

gofpel, conftrains the believing finner to prefent himfelf a living, willing, holy facrifice unto God. Thus being purified by the blood of Jefus, he offers to the Lord a facrifice in righteoufnefs. Such principles and aims are effential to a Chriftian minifter. He knows the terrors of the Lord, and has tafted of his goodnefs. He is conftrained by love, the love of Chrift and the love of fouls. He preaches as the apoftle did, Jefus Chrift and him crucified; a fubject which, though defpifed and reproached by the formal Jew, and the fceptical Greek, is evidenced by its efficacy to be the wifdom and power of God. Such minifters may be, and frequently are, depreciated and difregarded; but they cannot be contemptible, until integrity, benevolence, and ufefulnefs are the proper objects of contempt.

SERMON V.

IMMANUEL.

ISAIAH vii. 14.

Behold a virgin ſhall conceive, and bear a ſon, and ſhall call his name IMMANUEL, GOD WITH US.

THERE is a ſignature of wiſdom and power impreſſed upon the works of God, which evidently diſtinguiſhes them from the feeble imitations of men. Not only the ſplendour of the ſun, but the glimmering light of the glow-worm proclaims his glory. The ſtructure and growth of a blade of graſs, are the effects of the ſame power which produced the fabric of the heavens and the earth. In his word likewiſe he is inimitable. He has a ſtyle and manner peculiarly his own. What he is pleaſed to declare of himſelf by the prophet, may be prefixed as a proper

motto to the whole revelation of his will in the Bible. *My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, ſaith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, ſo are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts* *. This ſuperiority of his thoughts to ours, cauſes a proportionable difference in his manner of operation. His ways are above our conceptions, and often contrary to them. He ſometimes produces great effects, by means, which, to us, appear unſuitable and weak. Thus he gave Gideon a complete victory, not by providing him an army equal to that of the enemy, but by three hundred men furniſhed with earthen pitchers and lamps †. At other times the greatneſs of his preparations, intimates that there are difficulties in the caſe, inſuperable to any power but his own, where our narrow apprehenſions, until enlightened and enlarged by his teaching, can ſcarcely perceive any difficulty. It is eminently ſo, with reſpect to the reſtoration of fallen man to his favours. We have but ſlight thoughts of his holineſs, and therefore are but ſlightly affected by the evil of ſin. But though he

* Iſai. lv. 8, 9. † Judges vii. 19, 20.

be

be rich in mercy, no wiſdom, but his own, could have propoſed an expedient, whereby the exerciſe of his mercy towards ſinners, might be made to correſpond with his juſtice and truth, and with the honour of his moral government. His goſpel reveals this expedient, and points out a way in which mercy and truth meet together; and his inflexible righteouſneſs is diſplayed, in perfect harmony with the peace of ſinners who ſubmit to his appointment; and thus God appears, not only gracious but juſt, in receiving them to favour. This is the greateſt of all his works, and exhibits the moſt glorious diſcovery of his character and perfections. The means are anſwerable to the grandeur of the deſign, and are ſummarily expreſſed in my text.

I ſhall not take up your time with attempting to clear the difficulties which have been obſerved in the context. It may ſuffice for my purpoſe to affirm, that this paſſage expreſsly and excluſively refers to MESSIAH; for which my warrant is, the authority of the evangeliſts Matthew and Luke *, who directly apply it to him, and aſſure us that it was accompliſhed in him. If ſinners are to

* Matt. i. 23. Luke i. 31, 32.

be

be faved, without injury to the honour of his law and government (and otherwife they muft perifh) two things are neceffary,

I. That *a virgin fhall conceive and bring forth a fon.*

II. That this fon of the virgin fhall have a juft right to be called *Immanuel, God with us.*

I. *A virgin fhall conceive and bring forth a fon.* The Mediator, the furety for finful men, muft himfelf be a man. Becaufe thofe whom he came to redeem were partakers of flefh and blood, he therefore took part of the fame. Had not MESSIAH engaged for us, and appeared in our nature, a cafe would have occurred, which I think we may warrantably deem incongruous to the Divine Wifdom. I mean, that while fire and hail, fnow and vapour, and the ftormy wind fulfil the will of God; while the brutes are faithful to the inftincts implanted in them by their Maker, a whole fpecies of intelligent beings would have fallen fhort of the original law and defign of their creation, and indeed have acted in direct and continual oppofition to it. For the duty of man, to love, ferve, and truft God with all his heart and mind, and to love his neighbour as himfelf, is founded in the very

very nature and conſtitution of things, and neceſſarily reſults from his relation to God, and his abſolute dependence on him as a creature. Such a diſpoſition muſt undoubtedly have been *natural* to man before his fall, as it is for a bird to fly, or a fiſh to ſwim. The prohibitory form of the law delivered to Iſrael from Mount Sinai, is a ſufficient intimation that it was deſigned for *ſinners*. Surely our firſt parents, while in a ſtate of innocence, could not ſtand in need of warnings and threatnings to reſtrain them from worſhipping idols, or profaning the name of the great God whom they loved. Nor would it have been neceſſary to forbid murder, adultery, or injuſtice, if his poſterity had continued under the law of their creation, the law of love. But the firſt act of diſobedience degraded and diſabled man, detached him from his proper centre, if I may ſo ſpeak, and incapacitated him both for his duty and his happineſs. After his fall, it became impoſſible for either Adam or his poſterity to obey the law of God. But MESSIAH fulfilled it exactly, as a man, and the principles of it are renewed, by the power of his grace, in all who believe on him. And though their beſt endeavours

deavours fall ſhort, *his* obedience to it is accepted on their behalf; and he will at length perfectly reſtore them to their primitive order and honour. When they ſhall ſee him as he is, they will be like him, and all their powers and faculties will be perfectly conformed to his image.

Again, MESSIAH muſt not only be a man, but a partaker of our very nature. It had been equally eaſy to the power of God to have formed the body of the ſecond Adam, as he formed the firſt, out of the duſt of the earth. But though, in this way he would have been a true and perfect man, he would not have been more nearly related to us than to the angels. Therefore, when *God ſent forth his Son to be made under the law, to redeem us from the curſe of the law, that we might receive the adoption of children* *, and be re-admitted into his happy family, *he was made of a woman.* Thus he became our *Goel*, our near kinſman, with whom the right of redemption lay.

But farther, if he had derived his human nature altogether in the ordinary way, from ſinful parents, we ſee not how he could have avoided a participation in that defilement

* Gal. iv. 4, 5.

and

and depravity which the fall of Adam had entailed upon all his poſterity. But his body, that holy thing, conceived and born of a virgin, was the immediate production of God. Therefore he was perfectly pure and ſpotleſs, and qualified to be ſuch *a high prieſt as became us, holy, harmleſs, undefiled, and ſeparate from ſinners*; who needed not, as the typical high prieſts of Iſrael, *to offer up ſacrifice, firſt for his own ſin, and then for the ſins of the people* *. Theſe difficulties were obviated by a virgin's conceiving and bearing a ſon. His obedience was without defect, his nature without blemiſh, and having no ſin of his own, when he voluntarily offered himſelf to make an atonement for the ſins of his people, his ſacrifice, was, ſo far, anſwerable to the ſtrict and extenſive demands of the law and juſtice of God.

Let us make a ſolemn pauſe, and call upon our ſouls to admire and adore the wiſdom and power of God in this appointment. Thus the *Lord created a new thing upon the earth!*

II. But ſurely our admiration and gratitude will be raiſed ſtill higher, if we rightly underſtand the latter part of my text. This ſon

* Heb. vii. 26, 27.

of

by his laſt and higheſt act of obedience in ſubmitting to the death of the croſs, than it could have been by the unſinning obedience of all mankind to the end of time.

But MESSIAH was not only to obey the law for us, he was likewiſe to expiate, to ſuſtain and to exhauſt the curſe due to ſin *. In this attempt, no meer creature could have endured. Nor could the ſufferings of a creature have been propoſed to the univerſe, to angels and men, as a conſideration ſufficient to vindicate the righteouſneſs and truth of God in the remiſſion of ſin, after he had determined and ſolemnly declared *that the wages of ſin is death*. The apoſtle aſſures us, that *it is impoſſible for the blood of bulls and of goats to take away ſin* †. They who differ from the apoſtle in their judgment, who think it very poſſible for God, if he pleaſed, to forgive the ſinner who ſhould offer a bull or a goat, or even without any offering, by the ſovereign exerciſe of his mercy, may be reminded, that the queſtion is not ſimply what God *can* do, but what it *becomes him* to do, agreeable to his perfections, and to his character as governor of the world. Of this his infinite

* Gal. iii. 13. † Heb. x. 4.

wiſ-

wiſdom is the only competent judge; and we learn from his word, that it is impoſſible any blood but that of his own Son, can cleanſe us from guilt, or ſave us from miſery. The blood of a bull or a goat, of a man or an angel, (if angels could bleed) are all equally inſufficient to the great purpoſe of declaring his righteouſneſs, of manifeſting to all intelligent creatures, his inflexible diſpleaſure againſt ſin, in the very act of affording mercy to ſinners. But ſince the atoning blood is the blood of Immanuel, of him who is God with us; the ſinner who makes it his plea, builds his hope upon a rock which cannot be removed; and obtaining forgiveneſs in this way, he likewiſe obtains by it ſuch a knowledge of the heinouſneſs of ſin, as diſpoſes him from that hour to fear, hate, and forſake it.

But though forgiveneſs be an eſſential part of ſalvation, it is not the whole. We cannot be happy, except the power of ſin be likewiſe deſtroyed. A well-grounded hope in the mercy of God, is connected with a thirſt for ſanctification, and a conformity to his image. But neither this hope nor this deſire are natural to us. Our caſe requires the help of an

almighty arm, of the power which can cause the *blind to see, the deaf to hear, the dead to arise*; which can take away the heart of stone, and create a heart of flesh. So likewise the difficulties attendant on our Christian profession, arising from the spirit of the world around us, the snares to which we are exposed in every situation, our weakness, the deceitfulness of our hearts, the subtilty, vigilance, and power of our spiritual enemies, are so many and great, that unless he, on whom we depend for salvation, be able to save to the uttermost, we can have no security, either for our progress, or our perseverance, in the grace of God. Unless the Saviour of sinners be omnipresent, omniscient, unchangeable, *the same yesterday, to day, and for ever*, that is, unless he be God, how can he answer the prayers, satisfy the wants, and relieve the distresses of all who trust in him in every age, and of all who in every place equally need his support at the same moment? Or how can he engage to give rest to every weary soul, to secure them from perishing, and to bestow upon them eternal life? David comfortably concluded, that because the Lord was his shepherd, he should not want; and had no

 reason

reaſon to fear*, not even when paſſing through the valley of the ſhadow of death. To us Jeſus is made known as the great Shepherd of the ſheep; but how can we place the like confidence in him, unleſs we likewiſe are aſſured that our ſhepherd is the Lord?

I ſhall not attempt to vindicate this doctrine largely from the exceptions of thoſe who call themſelves men of reaſon. It is a point of revelation, and it is expreſsly revealed. It demands our aſſent upon the authority of God, who requires us to receive this record which he has given us of his Son. Thus far it approves itſelf to our reaſon, that however difficult it may be to our conceptions, yet thus it muſt be, upon a ſuppoſition that ſinners can be ſaved without prejudice to the honour of the divine government. If we affirm that he who was born in a ſtable, and ſuffered as a malefactor upon Mount Golgatha, is the true God and eternal life, many will think it a hard ſaying. But it is the doctrine of ſcripture, the very pillar and ground of truth; the only foundation of hope for an awakened conſcience, the only ſtandard by which we can properly eſtimate the

* Pſal. xxiii. 1. 4.

evil of sin, the worth of the soul, and the love of God. We do not, however, say, that the human nature of Christ, considered in itself, possesses the attributes of Deity, or is the proper object of worship; nor do we suppose that God could suffer, bleed, or die. But we say, with the apostle, *that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself* *. We believe that the human nature was so intimately and indissolubly united to the divine, that the properties and actings of each nature, are justly ascribed to the one person of Christ, God-man, *Immanuel, God with us*. Thus we read that the final judgment of the world is committed to a man, and that *God hath purchased his church with his own blood* †.

Behold then the character of MESSIAH in this prophecy! a man! a God! a divine person in the human nature. *God manifested in the flesh! Immanuel, God with us.*

As fallen creatures we had lost the true knowledge of God, and were unable to form such conceptions of his greatness and goodness, as are necessary to inspire us with reverence, to engage our confidence, or produce obedience to his will. His glory shines in

* 2 Cor. v. 19. † Acts xvii. 19. Acts xx. 28.

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the heavens and fills the earth; we are surrounded by the tokens of his power and presence; yet, till we are instructed by his word, and enlightened by his Holy Spirit, he is to us an *unknown God*. The prevalence of idolatry was early, and (with an exception to the people of Israel) soon became universal. Men who boasted of their reason, worshipped the sun and moon, yea, the works of their own hands, instead of the Creator. And even where revelation is vouchsafed, the bulk of mankind live without God in the world. But he is known, trusted, and served, by those who know MESSIAH. To them his glory is displayed in the person of Jesus Christ *. His agency is perceived in the creation, his providence is acknowledged, and his presence felt as *God with us*.

As fallen creatures, God is against us, and we are against him. The alienation of our hearts is the great cause of our ignorance of him. We are willingly ignorant. The thoughts of him are unwelcome to us, and we do not like to retain him in our knowledge. Guilt is the parent of atheism. A secret foreboding, that if there be a God, we

* 2 Cor. iv. 6.

are obnoxious to his displeasure; and that if he takes cognizance of our conduct, we have nothing to hope, but every thing to fear from him, constrains many persons to try to persuade themselves that there is no God; and many more to think, or at least to wish, that if there be a God he does not concern himself with human affairs. What a proof is this of the enmity of the heart of man against him! That so many persons who would tremble at the thought of being in a ship, driven by the winds and waves, without compass or pilot, should yet think it desirable, if it were possible, to be assured, that in a world like this, so full of uncertainty, trouble and change, all things were left at random, without the interference of a supreme governor. But this enmity, these dark apprehensions are removed, when the gospel is received by faith. For it brings us the welcome news that there is forgiveness with him. That God is reconciled in his Son to all who seek his mercy. In this sense, likewise, MESSIAH is *Immanuel*, *God with us*, on our side, no longer the avenger of sin, but the author of salvation.

Immanuel is *God with us*, God in our nature still. He suffered as a man, and as a

man

man he now reigns on the throne of glory; exercising all power and authority, and receiving all spiritual worship both in heaven and upon earth. He is the head of all principalities and powers, thrones and dominions. Thus man is not only saved, but unspeakably honoured and ennobled. He is brought into the nearest relation to him, who is over all blessed for ever. The angels adore him, but only redeemed sinners can say, *He loved us, and gave himself for us, he has washed us from our sin in his own blood* *; he is our Saviour, our shepherd, our friend, our *Immanuel, God with us.*

I shall conclude with a few obvious reflections which offer from this important subject.

1. What a cold assent is paid to the doctrine of the Godhead of Christ, by many who profess and receive it as a truth! They have received from education, from books or ministers, what is called an orthodox scheme of religious sentiments, and with this they are contented. They have not been accustomed to doubt of it, and therefore take it for granted that they really believe it. But as I have

* Gal. ii. 20. Rev. i. 5.

already hinted, it is ſo contrary to our natural apprehenſions, that no man can, from his heart, ſay that *Jeſus Chriſt is Lord*, unleſs he be taught of God. And a cordial belief of this point, will and muſt produce great and abiding effects. They who know the Saviour's name, will ſo truſt in him, as to renounce every other ground of confidence. They will love him ſupremely, and forſake every thing that ſtands in competition with his favour. They will glory in his croſs, they will eſpouſe his cauſe, and devote themſelves to his ſervice. They will make continual application to him, that they may receive out of his fulneſs grace according to their need. They will obey his precepts, and walk in his Spirit. Happy were it, indeed, if all who join in repeating the Creed, and who bow their knee at the mention of his name, were thus minded. But the lives, tempers, and purſuits of thouſands, give too ſure an evidence, that when they expreſs their aſſent with their lips, they neither know what they ſay, nor whereof they affirm. Their acknowledgment of his character, has no more ſalutary influence, than that of the evil ſpirits when he was upon earth, who ſaid, and perhaps with a much

fuller

fuller conviction, *We know thee who thou art, the holy one of God* *.

2. What a ſtrong foundation does this doctrine afford for the faith and hope of thoſe who indeed know MESSIAH, and have put their truſt in him. This truth is the rock upon which the church is built, and the gates of hell ſhall not prevail againſt it. *If God be for us, who ſhall be againſt us?* The difficulties of our warfare are great, the enemies of our peace are many. The world may frown, and ſatan will rage, but Jeſus has overcome the world, and is greater than all our foes. He will guide his people with his unerring wiſdom, ſupport them with his almighty arm, ſupply them out of the inexhauſtible riches of his grace, revive them when fainting, heal them when wounded, plead for them above as their great high prieſt, manage for them upon earth as their great ſhepherd, and at laſt make them more than conquerors, and give them a crown of life!

3. On the contrary, how dreadful muſt be the ſtate of thoſe who finally reject him, and ſay in their hearts, *We will not have this man to rule over us!* He is now propoſed as a Saviour,

* Mark i. 24.

he invites ſinners to come to him that they may have life, and aſſures us, *that him that cometh he will in no wiſe caſt out* *. Happy are they who hear and obey his voice to day, while it is called to day. To-morrow is uncertain. Death may be at the door, and at death our ſtate will be determined for eternity. They who refuſe him now, in the character of a Saviour, muſt then appear at his tribunal, and ſtand before him as their Judge; and muſt anſwer, in their own perſons, for all their tranſgreſſions of the holy law, and for their contempt of the goſpel of the grace of God!

* John vi. 37.

SER-

SERMON VI.

SALVATION PUBLISHED FROM THE MOUNTAINS.

ISAIAH xl. 9.

O Zion, that bringeſt good tidings, get thee up into the high mountains. O Jeruſalem, that bringeſt good tidings, lift up thy voice with ſtrength, lift it up, be not afraid: ſay unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God!

IT would be improper to propoſe an alteration, though a ſlight one, in the reading of a text, without bearing my teſtimony to the great value of our Engliſh verſion, which I believe, in point of ſimplicity, ſtrength, and fidelity, is not likely to be excelled by a new tranſlation of the *whole* ſcripture. But there are, undoubtedly, particular paſſages, where a ſmall change in the expreſſion, might render the ſenſe clearer, and be equally anſwerable to the

the original Hebrew or Greek. The addreſs of this verſe as it ſtands in the *Meſſiah* is, *O thou that telleſt good tidings*, &c. as the Biſhop of London has lately tranſlated it. Zion and Jeruſalem are conſidered by the prophet, not as bringing, but as receiving good tidings; and the publiſher of theſe good tidings is written with a feminine conſtruction. The ſenſe may be thus expreſſed, "Let her that bringeth good tidings to Jeruſalem and Zion, get up into the high mountains and lift up her voice." But the apoſtrophe is more animated. That it was the cuſtom in Iſrael for the women to publiſh and celebrate good news with ſongs and inſtruments is well known. We have an early inſtance in the book of Exodus. When the Lord had delivered them from the power of Pharaoh, and they ſaw their enemies, who had ſo lately threatened them, dead upon the ſea-ſhore, *Miriam, the ſiſter of Aaron, took a timbrel in her hand, and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances; and Miriam anſwered them, Sing ye to the Lord for he hath triumphed glorioully; the horſe and his rider hath he thrown into the ſea* *. So afterwards,

* Exod. xv. 20, 21.

when

when David returned from the ſlaughter of the Philiſtines, the women came out to meet him and Saul, with tabrets and inſtruments of muſic; and they anſwered one another as they played, Saul hath ſlain his thouſands, and David his ten thouſands *. Thus likewiſe, Deborah, in her ſublime ſong, repreſents the mother of Siſera †, and her women, ſinging alternately, from a confident, though vain expectation, that Siſera would return a conqueror. In my text, the prophet, in proſpect of MESSIAH's appearance, ſpeaks of it as an event ſuited to excite a general joy. The goſpel (as the word imports) is good news, glad tidings indeed! the beſt news that ever reached the ears, or cheered the heart of man. The women are, therefore, called upon to proclaim his approach, on the tops of the hills and mountains, from whence they may be ſeen, and heard to the greateſt advantage, for the ſpreading of the tidings throughout the whole country. Zion is as a beſieged city, but let her know that relief is at hand; ſay unto her, *Behold your God!* The Lord God will come with a ſtrong hand, or againſt the ſtrong one,

* 1 Sam. xviii. 6, 7. † Judges v. 28, 29.

and his people ſhall know him as their ſhepherd, full of care, kindneſs, and power.

The promiſe of *Immanuel, God with us*, is now to be ſpread like the morning from the tops of the mountains. The day is breaking, and this paſſage prepares for the following, *Ariſe, ſhine, for thy light is come!* The welcome news is to be diſperſed from Jeruſalem to Samaria, from Jew to Gentile, from one kingdom to another people, till all the nations and ends of the earth *ſhall ſee the ſalvation of God* *.

The cauſes of this exultation ariſes from the character of MESSIAH, compared with the deſign of his appearance, and this is anſwerable to the condition in which he finds mankind.

The deplorable ſtate of fallen man by nature, is largely deſcribed both in the Old Teſtament and in the New. It may ſuffice to take notice of three principal features, which characterize our whole ſpecies, and apply to every individual of the race of Adam, until the grace of God, which bringeth ſalvation, affords relief. Theſe are guilt, alienation of heart, and miſery.

* Pſal. xcviii. 3.

1. *Guilt*.

1. *Guilt*. All have finned. We are the creatures of God. He made us, and he preferves us. Our life, faculties, and comforts are all from him. He is therefore our great Lord, our fupreme benefactor. Of courfe we belong to him. His we are, and not our own. It follows that dependance, gratitude, fubmiffion, and obedience, are incumbent on us, as they muft be upon all intelligent creatures, from the very nature of things. The relation which fubfifts between an infinitely wife and good Creator and his creatures, if capable of knowing him, neceffarily implies this fubjection. And the obligation is indiffoluble. But we have evidently broken this law of our creation. We have violated the order of God's government. We have implicitly, if not formally, renounced our allegiance, difowned his right over us, and fet up for ourfelves. A dependant creature affecting independance; a worm prefuming upon its own power, making itfelf its own end; a rebel againft the divine government, boafting of morality and goodnefs, and trufting to his own conduct to recommend him to the favour of his Maker; a being formed

formed for immortality, propofing his whole happinefs in things which he feels to be unfatisfying, knows to be uncertain, and from which he is confcious he muft, in a few years at moft, be finally removed; thefe are folecifms which ftrongly prove the depravity, degeneracy, and demerit of man. It is poffible, that had we been wholly left to ourfelves, we fhould never have been aware, while in this world, of the juft and inevitable confequences of our rebellion. Having loft all right thoughts of God, and conceiving of him, as if he were altogether like ourfelves, we might have felt neither fear nor remorfe. But there is a revelation, by which we are informed of his determined purpofe to avenge difobedience, and to vindicate the honour of his government; and we are affured, that he is not an indifferent fpectator of our oppofition to his eftablifhed order. His juftice and truth are engaged to punifh tranfgreffors, and our obnoxioufnefs to punifhment, is what we mean by *guilt*. If the fcripture be true, there is no way of efcape, unlefs he himfelf be pleafed to appoint one. This he has done, and the declaration of this appointment is a part of the good-tidings contained in my text.

Pro-

Proclaim it from the tops of the mountains, that there is forgivenefs with him. Say unto Jerufalem, Behold MESSIAH, Behold your God! He comes to put away fin by the facrifice of himfelf *. He *can* do it, for he is God; and he *will* do it, for he has taken on him our nature for this very purpofe †. *Behold the Lamb of God, who taketh away the fin of the world!*

2. *Alienation of mind.* Not only is it true that we have finned againft the Lord, but a principle of averfion from him is deeply rooted in our hearts. Therefore one part of our natural character is, *haters of God* ‡. This is thought a hard faying. Many who will admit that their conduct is blameable, and that they are not altogether what they ought to be, will by no means plead guilty to this charge. If they fall fhort of their duty, and in fome inftances tranfgrefs his commandment, they fay, It is their infirmity; they are forry, and hope to do better fome time or other. However, they are willing to think that their hearts are tolerably good, they mean well, and are fhocked at the idea of hating God. They rather prefume that

* Heb. ix. 26. † 2 Cor. v. 21. ‡ Rom. i. 30.

they love him, though they are not ſo careful to pleaſe him as they ſhould be. I do not aſſert that we hate God under that character, which, our vain imaginations form of him. If we can perſuade ourſelves, in direct contradiction to the teſtimony of ſcripture, that he is not ſtrict to mark what is amiſs; that he will diſpenſe with the ſtrictneſs of his law; that he will ſurely have mercy upon us, becauſe we are not openly abandoned and profligate in our conduct; that he will accept of lip-worſhip in which the heart has no concern, reward us for actions in which we had no intention of pleaſing him, permit us to love and ſerve the world with all our mind, and ſoul, and ſtrength, while we live, and make us happy in another world, when we can live in this no longer—If we form ſuch an image of God, it is too much like our own to provoke our enmity, for it is deſtitute of holineſs, juſtice, and truth. But *the carnal mind is* and muſt be, *enmity againſt God* * according to the character he has given of himſelf in his word. We have an inbred diſlike to all his moral attributes, to the rule of his government, and to the methods of his grace.

* Rom. viii. 7.

We

We cannot, that is, we will not, propoſe either his glory as our chief end, or his favour as our chief good. The proof is plain. The ends which we actually purſue, and the ſuppoſed good which we deliberately prefer, are utterly inconſiſtent with the plan which he has preſcribed for us. His ways, though truly pleaſant in themſelves, appear unpleaſing to us, and we think we can plan better for ourſelves. We do not like *to retain God in our thoughts* *, which is a ſure ſign of enmity. Nay, this enmity is ſo ſtrong in us naturally, that we cannot bear others ſhould think more highly of God than we do, or be more attached to him than we are. This was the ground of the firſt murder. Abel loved God, and God was pleaſed to teſtify his approbation of Abel, and therefore Cain killed him †. This has been the great cauſe of the oppoſition and ill-treatment which the ſervants of God have met with from the men of the world in all ſucceeding ages. A cauſe which ſtill ſubſiſts, and will continue to operate upon poſterity yet unborn. Can we ſhow a ſtronger mark of diſlike to a perſon, than by hating all who profeſs a regard to

* Rom. i. 28. † 1 John iii. 12.

 him,

him, and when that is the only caufe of our refentment? Such is the prevailing enmity againft God. For how often do we fee that when his grace enables a finner to forfake the fpirit and practice of the world, his former friends are immediately offended; and, perhaps, thofe of his own houfhold, become his inveterate enemies?

But, *O thou that bringeft good tidings, lift up thy voice.* Say to poor finners, *Behold your God!* He comes to take this enmity away! The crofs of Chrift fubdues it, when every other expedient has been found ineffectual. The heart, too hard to be foftened by a profufion of temporal benefits, and too ftout to be fubdued by afflictions, is melted by the dying love of a Saviour; and by that difcovery of the divine perfections, which is exhibited in redemption. We have a ftriking inftance of this effect, in the cafe of Saul of Tarfus *. His mifguided confcience, under the influence of prejudice, perfuaded him, *that he ought to do many things againft Jefus of Nazareth.* Inftigated with rage, and not fatiffied with the injuries he had offered to his

* Acts ix. 1—20.

dif-

difciples at Jerufalem, but *ftill breathing out threatnings and flaughter*, he journeyed towards Damafcus, defigning to harrafs and perfecute them wherever he found them. In this temper of mind, he was fuddenly arrefted on his way, by a light, and a voice from heaven. He fell to the ground. But Jefus, whom he had ignorantly perfecuted, inftructed him in the knowledge of his perfon and love, pardoned his fin, and commiffioned him to preach the faith he had laboured to deftroy. How fudden, how evident, how abiding was the change which then took place in his heart and in his conduct! From that moment he accounted *all things lofs and dung, for the excellency of the knowledge of Chrift Jefus his Lord* *. Unwearied by labour and hardfhip, undifmayed by oppofition and danger, he fpent the remainder of his life in the caufe of his Mafter; and, like Cæfar, accounting nothing done, while any thing remained to do, his active and intrepid fpirit was continually meditating new fervices †. And, though he knew that bonds and afflictions awaited him in every place, he was always upon the wing to publifh to his fellow finners, the grace

* Phil. iii. 8. † Acts xix. 21.

and glory of him, whom he had ſo long op-poſed, only becauſe he knew him not. And although the circumſtances attending the apoſtle's caſe were extraordinary, the caſe it-ſelf, as to the ſubſtance, is not ſingular. I truſt many perſons in this aſſembly have been the ſubjects of a like change. The doctrine which Paul preached, has enlightened your underſtandings, has inſpired you with hopes and deſires to which you were once ſtrangers, and given a new direction to the conduct and aims of your life. You were once afar off from God, but you are now brought nigh by the blood of Chriſt. You once lived to your-ſelves, but now you feel that you are no longer your own, and have devoted yourſelves to him who died to ſave you from the preſent evil world, and from the wrath to come.

3. *Miſery*. If we are guilty in the ſight of God, and alienated from him in our hearts, we muſt be miſerable. Guilt entails a bur-den, and a foreboding of evil upon the con-ſcience. And our alienation from the foun-tain of living waters *, compels us (for we are inſufficient to our own happineſs) to ſeek our reſources from broken ciſterns, and pits

* Jer. ii. 13.

which will hold no water. Farther, Sin has filled the world with wo. The whole creation travels and groans; and natural evil is inseperable from moral, as the ſhadow from the body. Though the earth be filled with tokens of the goodneſs, patience, and forbearance of God, it likewiſe abounds with marks of his diſpleaſure. I think we have ſufficient reaſon to attribute earthquakes, hurricanes, famine, and peſtilence, to ſin as their original and proper cauſe. We can hardly conceive, that if mankind had continued in that happy ſtate of love and obedience to God, in which our firſt parents were created, they would have been expoſed to ſuch calamities. When God at the beginning, ſurveyed every thing that he had made, *behold it was very good* *. All was beauty and harmony, till ſin introduced diſorder and a curſe. But far worſe than what we ſuffer immediately from the providence of God, are the evils which we bring upon ourſelves and upon each other. The dreadful conſequences of war, rapine, diſcord, hatred, ambition, avarice, and intemperance, furniſh part of every page in the mournful hiſtory of human life, and are felt

* Gen. i. 31.

in every nation, city, village, and family. Want, cares, and diſeaſes prey upon individuals. Diſappointment, diſſatisfaction, vanity, and vexation of ſpirit, are experienced by perſons of every rank, and in every ſtage of human life. How much more deſirable would it be, were it not for the hope of the Goſpel, to ſhare with the brute creation, than to bear the name of man in his fallen ſtate! The brutes have few wants; their propenſities, and the means of gratifying them, are ſuited to their natures, adapted to their powers, and conducive to the preſervation of the ſpecies. They neither regret the paſt, nor tremble under apprehenſions of the future. It is far otherwiſe with man. His boaſted pleaſures end with a ſting, and often he cannot bear his own reflections on them. He ſuffers almoſt as much from imaginary fears, as from real afflictions. The more he poſſeſſes, the more are the ſources of his anxieties multiplied and enlarged. And after having been long wearied with a train of mortifications, pains, and inquietudes, he muſt at laſt, however unwilling, yield to that ſtroke of death; the thought of which, when ſtrongly realized to his mind, was always

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ſufficient to embitter the happieſt hours of his life.

But publiſh the glad tidings from the mountains, and let the joyful ſound diffuſe over the plain—*Your God cometh.* MESSIAH eſtabliſhes a new, a ſpiritual kingdom upon the earth, and his happy ſubjects are freed from the miſery in which they were involved. They commit all their concerns to him, and he manages for them. Their fears are removed, their irregular deſires corrected, and all that is really good for them, is ſecured to them by his love, promiſe, and care. Afflictions ſtill await them, but they are ſanctified. To them the nature of afflictions is changed. They are appointments graciouſly deſigned for their advantage. Their croſſes no leſs than their comforts, are tokens of God's favour *; they have them only becauſe their preſent ſituation requires diſcipline, and they could not be ſo well without them. They are aſſured of ſupport under them †, and a final deliverance out of them all: for there is a happy hour approaching when all their troubles ſhall ceaſe, and they ſhall enter upon

* Heb. xii. 6, 7. † 2 Cor. xii. 9.

a ſtate of eternal, uninterrupted, inconceivable joy *.

For theſe purpoſes the Son of God was revealed. The prophets ſaw his day afar off, and proclaimed his approach.—*Thy God cometh!* Though truly a man, he is truly God. Neither man nor angel could remove our guilt, communicate to us a ſpiritual life, relieve us from miſery, and give us ſtable peace in a changing world, hope and triumph in death, and eternal life beyond it. But his wiſdom and power are infinite, and his purpoſe unchangeable. He would not have invited the weary and heavy laden to come to him, if he was not able and determined to give them reſt. None that ſeek him are diſappointed, or ſent empty away. A ſufficient proof that his compaſſion, his bounty, his fulneſs are properly divine. Therefore the apoſtle, ſpeaking of the riches of his grace, uſes the epithet, *Unſearchable* †. His treaſury of life and ſalvation is inexhauſtible, like a boundleſs, ſhoreleſs, bottomleſs ocean; like the ſun, which having cheered the ſucceſſive generations of mankind with his beams, ſtill ſhines with undiminiſhed luſtre, is ſtill the

* Iſai. lx. 20. Rev. xxi. 4. † Epheſ. iii. 8.

foun-

fountain of light, and has always a ſufficiency to fill innumerable millions of eyes in the ſame inſtant.

Does the language of my text cauſe joy to ſpring up in your hearts? or is it nothing to you? If you heard the *Meſſiah*, you were, perhaps, affected by the muſic of the paſſage; how much are you to be pitied, if you are hitherto unaffected by the ſentiment! Yet once more, hear—*Thy God cometh!* He did come in the fulneſs of time, according to the prophecy, and the word of prophecy aſſures us, that he will come again. *Behold he cometh in the clouds; and every eye ſhall ſee him, and they alſo that pierced him* *—*Prepare to meet thy God* †.

* Rev. i. 7. † Amos iv. 12.

SERMON VII.

THE MORNING LIGHT.

ISAIAH lx. 1—3.

Ariſe, ſhine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is riſen upon thee. For behold, the darkneſs ſhall cover the earth, and groſs darkneſs the people: but the Lord ſhall ariſe upon thee, and his glory ſhall be ſeen upon thee, and the Gentiles ſhall come to thy light, and kings to the brightneſs of thy riſing.

ONE ſtrong internal proof that the Bible is a divine revelation, may be drawn from the ſubject matter; and particularly that it is the book, and the only book, which teaches us to think highly and honourably of God. I ſay, the only book, for there is no right knowledge of God where the Bible is not known. What is the Jupiter of Homer, compared with the God of Iſrael, as he is re-

pre-

presented to us by his servants the prophets? And if the Heathen philosophers, in some detached passages, have sentiments not altogether unworthy of him, history honestly tells us how they obtained them. They travelled, and they are generally said to have travelled into Phœnicia or Egypt, to the confines of that people who alone thought rightly of God, because to them only he had made himself known by a revelation. If such a description as we have in the fortieth chapter of Isaiah, from the twelfth verse to the end, had been known only of late years, recovered, we will suppose, out of the ruins of Herculaneum, there is little doubt but it would have engaged the attention and admiration of the learned world. For the most admired writings of antiquity, upon a candid comparison, are unspeakably inferior to it. The inimitable sublimity of the prophets is natural, just, and unforced, and flows from the grandeur of their subjects, because they were influenced by him, who alone can speak worthily of himself.

A song so vast, a theme so high,
Calls for the voice that tun'd the sky.

With

With them, the whole compaſs of the creation is but as duſt upon the balance, in reſpect of the great Creator. His purpoſe is fate, his voice is power. He ſpeaks, and it is done. Thus he called the univerſe into being; and thus, as the great Lord and proprietor of all, he ſtill maintains and governs it, directing the frame of nature, and every particular event and contingence, to the promoting of his own glory, the laſt and higheſt end of all his works.

The principal of theſe is, the exhibition of his perfections in the perſon of his Son. The prophecies we have already conſidered, announce this event, with a gradual increaſe of clearneſs and preciſion, as the period of accompliſhment is ſuppoſed to draw nigh. We lately heard the command to proclaim his approach from the hills and the tops of the mountains. Here the prophet begins to contemplate the effects of his actual appearance. The earth is conſidered as involved in a ſtate of groſs darkneſs; but the ſun, the Sun of Righteouſneſs is about to ariſe, and to fill it, by his beams, with light, life, and glory. Theſe effects, indeed, will not extend to all, for many will love darkneſs rather than light.

But

But he will not ſhine in vain. There will be a people prepared to receive him, and to rejoice in his light. They ſhall ariſe as from ſleep, as from the grave, and his light reflected upon them, ſhall cauſe them to ſhine likewiſe. Darkneſs ſhall ſtill cover thoſe who reject him; yea, their darkneſs will be increaſed. But the glory of the Lord ſhall be ſeen upon all who believe, and their numbers, from age to age, ſhall be enlarged. Nations ſhall come to him, and kings ſhall be ſubſervient to the ſpreading of his kingdom. Such is the ſcope of the paſſage before us. I ſhall briefly conſider a few of the leading particulars contained in it.

I. As the ſun is the ſource of light to the natural world, ſo is MESSIAH to the moral and ſpiritual world. Light, and its oppoſite, darkneſs, are figuratively uſed in ſcripture. The latter is applied to a ſtate of ignorance, ſin, and miſery, as in the following texts. *He that walketh in darkneſs, knoweth not whither he goeth* *. *If we ſay that we have fellowſhip with him, and walk in darkneſs, we lie and do not the truth* †. *Caſt ye the unprofitable ſervant into outer darkneſs, there ſhall be weeping*

* John xii. 35. † 1 John i. 6.

and

and gnaſhing of teeth *. The former, therefore, ſignifies true knowledge, holineſs, and happineſs. *Ye were ſometime darkneſs, but now are ye light in the Lord, walk as children of light* †. *When I ſit in darkneſs, the Lord ſhall be a light unto me* ‡. *Light is ſown for the righteous, and joy for the upright in heart* ||. I ſelect but one inſtance of each kind; an attentive reader of the ſcripture will meet with many expreſſions of a like import. But there is likewiſe an intermediate ſtate. Light advancing from the early dawn to the perfect day. This twilight, no leſs than day-light, is from the ſun. Such was the ſtate of the Old Teſtament Church. MESSIAH was the ſource of their knowledge, hope, and joy; but he was (if I may ſo ſpeak) below the horizon, as to them. Though believers, under that diſpenſation, were a people ſaved of the Lord, they were trained up under types and ſhadows, were influenced by a ſpirit of comparative bondage and diſtance, like children under age, and rather longed for, than actually poſſeſſed the gracious liberty which the children of God enjoy under the goſpel. But

* Matt. xxv. 30. † Eph. v. 8. ‡ Micah vii. 8.
|| Pſal. xcvii. 11.

the sun arose, and the shadows vanished, when the Son of God incarnate dwelt and conversed with men, honoured his temple with his personal presence, and superseded all the Levitical sacrifices, by the one offering of himself upon the cross. *The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.* But more especially we date the beginning of his visible kingdom from the day of Pentecost, which followed his ascension. Then he signally bestowed the gifts, which, as Mediator, he had received for men, and by the power of his Holy Spirit, authorized and qualified his servants to go forth and preach salvation in his name. Then the partition wall between Jew and Gentile was taken away, *and his righteousness was openly shewn in the sight of the Heathen.* Abraham, Moses, Elijah, and other servants of God, had been highly favoured and highly honoured; but we are assured by our Lord himself, that none born of woman had been greater than John his fore-runner—and yet he added, *the least in the kingdom of heaven,* that is, in the New Testament, or gospel church, *is greater than he**. The apostles were happy in the peculiar privilege of attending on his person; yet he

* Matt. xi. 11.

told

told them, *It is expedient for you that I go away* *. There were ſtill greater privileges depending upon the influence of the promiſed Comforter, who was to abide with the church for ever. By the power of this Holy Spirit, the Lord is now preſent with all his miniſters and people in every place, whether retired in ſecret from the view of men, or aſſembled together in his name †; and though the great events upon which their hopes were founded, his life, paſſion, death, reſurrection, and aſcenſion, took place long ago, he ſo realizes the declaration of them in his word to their hearts, that they are no leſs aſſured of what they read, than the apoſtles who ſaw him with their own eyes. Thus the goſpel ſtate is a diſpenſation of light. The Sun is riſen with life and healing in his beams, and they who have the eyes of their underſtanding opened, enjoy a bright and marvellous day. They ſee, admire, adore, rejoice, and love.

II. The ſubjects of MESSIAH's kingdom, the living members of his church, are ſo irradiated by him, that they ſhine likewiſe. As the moon ſhines, but with a borrowed

* John xvi. 7. † Matt. vi. 6. xviii. 20. xxviii. 20.

light, derived from the ſun. *Beholding, in this glaſs, the glory of the Lord, they are changed into the ſame image from glory to glory* *, according to the meaſure and growth of their faith. Two points may be obſerved under this head.

1. *The fact.* That they do thus ſhine. Though they were once darkneſs, they are now light †. A dark, ignorant, wicked, ſelfiſh Chriſtian, is a contradiction in terms. There *may be* ſuch, there *are* too many ſuch, amongſt thoſe who make profeſſion of the name of Chriſt; but they who truly know him *walk in the light, as he is in the light.* They have knowledge, *a good underſtanding* ‡. Perhaps, the greater part of real Chriſtians have little acquaintance with the literature and ſcience of the world; their natural capacities may be weak, and not improved by education; they may be in the eſteem of men, as they are in their own, but babes; yet they know more than the wiſeſt philoſophers, who are deſtitute of the grace of God. They know themſelves, they know the Lord, they know

* 2 Cor. iii. 18. † Eph. v. 8. ‡ Pſal. cxi. 10.

the evil of ſin, and the way of ſalvation; what their proper happineſs conſiſts in, and how it is to be obtained. They have learned to endure affliction, to forgive injuries, and to overcome evil with good. They have attained a juſt ſenſe of the vanity of the world, and the importance of eternity. They are inſtructed to be contented and uſeful in their ſtations, to diſcharge their duties in relative life with propriety, and to meet death with comfort. In all theſe particulars, many who have dazzling talents, and are celebrated for abilities and endowments, are miſerably at a loſs. True believers are conformed to the ſpirit and temper of their Saviour, and therefore are different and diſtinguiſhed from the world around them. And they have, at leaſt, the beginnings of true peace and ſolid happineſs, in communion with him whom they ſerve.

2. *The cauſe.* They ſhine wholly by his light. If their own words may be taken, the proof of this is eaſy. They are free to confeſs that they are only wiſe by his wiſdom, ſtrong by his power working in them, and that without him they *have not ſufficiency to*

think a good thought *. Experience has taught them that they cannot ſtand unleſs he upholds them, nor watch unleſs he watcheth with them, nor be ſafe or happy a ſingle day, without freſh communications from him. But this their experience and acknowledgment, is the expreſs and current doctrine of ſcripture. There is a real, though myſtical, union between Chriſt and his people. He is the vine †, they the branches: he is their head, they the members of his body. They dwell in him by faith, he dwells in them by his Spirit. He is their root and their life; all their ſprings are in him, and it is out of his *fulneſs that they receive* ‡. Therefore the apoſtle ſays, *I live, yet not I, but Chriſt liveth in me* ‖; *I can do all things through Chriſt ſtrengthening me* §. And our Lord himſelf, who comforted Paul with that promiſe, *My grace is ſufficient for thee*, apprized all his followers of their entire dependance upon him, by ſaying, *Without me ye can do nothing* ꝉ. The language of the Old Teſtament is to the ſame purport, *They looked unto him and were enlightened* **. *In the Lord* Jehovah *I have*

* 2 Cor. iii. 5. † John xv. 1. ‡ John i. 16.
‖ Gal. ii. 20. § 2 Cor. xii. 9. ꝉ John xv. 5.
** Pſal. xxxiv. 5.

righ-

righteousness and strength *. *He giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might he increaseth strength* †. Thus things are constituted and conducted, *that no flesh should glory in his presence, but that he who glorieth may glory in the Lord* ‡.

III. They who wilfully refuse and turn from this light, do thereby involve themselves in double darkness, and become more infatuated and wicked, than those to whom the light has not been proposed. Their evils, likewise, are more aggravated than they would have been, if the light had not visited them. Thus our Lord, MESSIAH, speaks of the Jews, *If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin; but now they have no cloke for their sin* ‖. And again, *For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not might see, and that they which see might be made blind* §. He came to make the ignorant wise unto salvation; but they, who from a proud conceit of their own wisdom and sufficiency, disdain his instruction, being left to themselves, give abundant evidence, that the light they boast of, is but gross and palpable darkness. The

* Isai. xlv. 24. † Isai. xl. 29. ‡ 1 Cor. i. 29, 31.
‖ John xv. 22. § John ix. 39.

grossest errors, the greatest obduracy of heart, the most extreme profaneness of spirit, and the most abominable wickedness in practice, may be expected, and will certainly be found where the gospel is despised.

It is evident, that the morality which is so highly admired by the Christian world, and set in opposition to the gospel of Christ, is much leaner, and more scanty than the morality of the Heathens. I speak of the idea only, for neither have the Heathens of old, nor of the present day, acted up to their own rules. But I do not hesitate to affirm, that none of our modern moralists, who have disowned the gospel revelation, have given us a system of morality equal to that of Tully the Pagan. Many of the Heathens acknowledged the desireableness and necessity of revelation; though Infidels, born in a Christian land, think it a high mark of their wisdom to despise it. And avowed Atheists, that is, men, who deny either the Being or the Providence of God, or the obligations mankind are under to obey him, are seldom to be met with but in countries where the Bible is known. The heart must have obstinately and repeatedly resisted light and conviction, before it can ordi-

ordinarily proceed to these dreadful lengths. But while the blind ſtumble in the noon of day, MESSIAH's people ſhall walk in confidence and peace*, and ſhine as lights in the midſt of a crooked and perverſe generation †.

IV. The third verſe of this chapter foretells, and therefore ſecures, the converſion of the Gentiles or Heathens. The times and the ſeaſons are in the diſpoſal of God, but the ſcriptures muſt be fulfilled. Much was done in the firſt age of Chriſtianity. A ſingle inſtrument, the apoſtle Paul, as he himſelf informs us, preached the faith, which he formerly laboured to deſtroy, *from Jeruſalem round about to Illyricum* ‡, and probably much farther afterwards. And the Lord, who appointed him to this ſervice, accompanied his meſſage with his own power; ſo that he had ſignal ſucceſs, in turning men from darkneſs to light, and from the worſhip of dumb idols, to ſerve the living and true God; and in planting the goſpel, and gathering churches in every province. The goſpel found an early reception at Rome, which facilitated its ſpread into the different parts of the Roman empire. And we have reaſon to believe it

* Pſal. lxxxix. 15, 16. † Phil. ii. 15. ‡ Rom. xv. 19.

was

was introduced into our island, in a few years after our Lord's ascension. And though what was called the conversion of Heathen nations in some following ages, went little farther, than to prevail on them to assume the name of Christians, and left them, considered as nations, as destitute of the spirit and blessings of Christianity, as it found them; yet, I cannot doubt, that wherever the New Testament, and the sufferings of MESSIAH were known, some individuals, at least, experienced a real and saving change. And we are warranted to hope for still greater things; for a time when the gross darkness, which as yet covers a great part of the world, shall be dispelled; and the Redeemer's kingdom, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, *as a stone cut out without hands, shall become a great mountain, and fill the whole earth* *. But this pleasing subject will come more directly under our consideration hereafter.

V. The call in my text, may be taken in a general sense, like that of the apostle, *Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light* †. Natural light requires eyes to perceive it. It would be ab-

* Dan. ii. 35. † Eph. v. 14.

surd,

ſurd to point out the beauties of an extenſive proſpect to a blind man. To him the face of nature preſents only a univerſal blank. But the light of the goſpel, not only diſcovers the moſt important objects to thoſe who can ſee, but has a marvellous efficacy to open the eyes of the blind. It is the appointed inſtrument of Divine power for this purpoſe. In vain would be the labour and expectation of the huſbandman, if God did not afford the rain, and the ſnow, to water the earth, and the enlivening influences of the ſun, to draw forth the tender blade, and to ripen the corn. Equally unſucceſsful would the preaching of the goſpel prove to ſinful men, though in itſelf it be eminently the truth and wiſdom of God, exactly ſuited to their ſtate, and of the higheſt importance to their welfare, if he had not promiſed that his word, where ſimply and faithfully delivered, in dependence upon his bleſſing, ſhall not be ſpoken in vain, but ſhall certainly accompliſh the end for which he has ſent it *. This promiſe, together with the experience of its truth in our own caſe, and our knowledge of its uniform effects in every age and country where the doctrine of the

* Iſai. lv, 10, 11.

croſs

crofs has been preached, encourages minifters to perfevere in publifhing the glad tidings, in defiance of all the oppofition and difappointments we meet with. We lament, but cannot wonder, that the gofpel is fo generally neglected. As a difpenfation of grace, it offends the pride of man; as a difpenfation of holinefs, it contradicts his defires and paffions. His fpirit is degraded, his heart is pre-engaged, he loves the prefent world, and has no more tafte or inclination for a life of communion with God here, and fuch a heaven as the fcripture propofes hereafter, than the beafts of the field. But the Lord has faid, *I will work, and who fhall let it* *. When he is pleafed to clothe the word preached, with the influence of his Holy Spirit, and to apply it to the confcience, it is quick, powerful, penetrating, and irrefiftible as lightning; it conveys a voice, which the deaf, yea, the dead, muft hear; it forces a light upon the mind which cannot be evaded. Then things are feen as they are. The nature and defert of fin is apprehended, and then the gofpel is found to be the only balm for a diftreffed and wounded confcience. Therefore having the Lord's

* Ifai. xliii. 13.

com-

command and promiſe, we are not to be diſcouraged by the careleſſneſs or obſtinacy of thoſe who know not what they do. We are aware of the difficulty, yea, the impoſſibility of ſucceeding in our endeavour to ſave the ſouls of our hearers, if we had only to depend upon our own arguments or earneſtneſs. We are not to reaſon, but to obey. Our buſineſs is to deliver our meſſage, and in our happier moments to water it with our prayers and tears. When we have done this we can do no more. The event muſt be left with him in whoſe name we ſpeak. We muſt not ſuppreſs nor diſguiſe what we are commanded to declare; nor wilfully make any additions of our own, to accommodate it to the taſte or prejudice of our hearers *. Let thoſe preach ſmooth things who will venture to anſwer, at the great tribunal, for the ſouls that have miſcarried under their miniſtry, *we dare not*. Let thoſe be aſhamed of the goſpel of Chriſt †, who feel no obligations to him for his dying love; *we cannot*, and by the grace of God, *we will not*. We will glory in it. *God forbid that we ſhould glory in any thing* elſe ‡! Like Ezekiel, we

* 2 Cor. iv. 2. † Rom. i. 16. ‡ Gal. vi. 14.

are commanded to preach and prophesy to dry bones, and he who sends us can cause the dry bones to live. *O ye dry bones, hear the word of the Lord* *. The word of his salvation is sent to you. *The Lord is risen indeed! Arise, shine, for your light is come.* In his name we proclaim pardon and peace to all who will seek him. But seek him to day, while it is called to day, to-morrow is not yours. Seek him now, while he may be found. Harden not your hearts. Tremble, *lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should finally come short of it* †.

* Ezek. xxxvii. 4. † Heb. iv. 1.

SER-

SERMON VIII.

THE SUN RISING UPON A DARK WORLD.

ISAIAH ix. 2.

The people that walked in darkneſs have ſeen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the ſhadow of death, upon them hath the light ſhined.

CONTRASTS are ſuited to illuſtrate and ſtrengthen the impreſſion of each other. The happineſs of thoſe, who by faith in MESSIAH, are brought into a ſtate of peace, liberty, and comfort, is greatly enhanced and heightened by the conſideration of that previous ſtate of miſery in which they once lived, and of the greater miſery to which they were juſtly expoſed. They are not only made *meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the ſaints in light* *, but they have been delivered

* Col. i. 12, 13.

from the powers of darkneſs. Thus while they have communion with God as a Father, they contemplate their privilege with a greater pleaſure, than they probably could do if they had never known a difference. They remember a time when they were *afar off, without hope and without God in the world*; and they remember how careleſsly they then trifled upon the brink of deſtruction. In this deplorable and dangerous ſituation they were *found of the Lord, when they ſought him not* *. He convinced, humbled, and pardoned them, and brought them near to himſelf, into a ſtate of adoption and communion by the blood of Jeſus. The admiration, gratitude, and love, which they feel for this undeſerved grace, gives them a more lively ſenſe of the bleſſings they enjoy. Yea, the thought of what they have been redeemed from (of which they will then have a much clearer perception than at preſent) will add to their joys in heaven, and inſpire ſuch a ſong of praiſe as will be peculiar to themſelves, and in which the holy angels, who never felt the ſtings of guilt, nor taſted the ſweetneſs of pardoning mercy, will not be able to join them. They are accord-

* Iſai. lxv. 1.

ingly

ingly reprefented, in the prophetical vifion, as ftanding neareft to the throne, and uniting in the nobleft ftrains of praife to him who fitteth upon it *; while the furrounding angels can only take part in the chorus, and admire and adore, when they behold the brighteft difplays of the glory of the wonder-working God, manifefted in his love to worthlefs, helplefs finners.

Thefe oppofite ideas are joined in my text. The people who are fpoken of as rejoicing in a great light, were, till this light arofe and fhone upon them, *in darknefs*; walking, fitting, living in darknefs, and in the land of the fhadow of death. That this paffage refers to MESSIAH, we have a direct proof. The evangelift † refers it exprefsly to him, and points out the time and manner of its literal accomplifhment. I fhall firft confider the literal fenfe and completion of the prophecy, and then fhew how fitly it applies to the ftate of mankind at large, and to the happy effects of the gofpel of falvation; which, by the bleffing of God, has been the inftrument of bringing multitudes of many nations, peoples,

* Rev. v. 9—12. † Matt. iv. 15, 16.

 and

and languages, out of a ſtate of groſs *darkneſs, into marvellous light* *.

I. Hebrew words (like many in our own language) have often more than one ſignification. But only one ſenſe can be expreſſed in a verſion. And therefore interpreters and tranſlators frequently differ. Which of the different words, uſed to expreſs the meaning of the ſame original term, is moſt happily choſen, may be ſometimes decided by the context. The two words, in the firſt verſe of this chapter, rendered *lightly afflicted* and *grievouſly afflicted*, ſignify likewiſe, the one to think lightly of, to account vile; and the other, to honour, to render honourable and glorious. Both theſe words occur in one verſe, and are uſed in theſe ſenſes, in the Lord's meſſage to Eli, *Them that honour me I will honour, and they that deſpiſe me ſhall be lightly eſteemed* †. Had the ſame words been thus rendered in the paſſage before us, the ſenſe of both verſes would, I think, have been more plain, connected, and conſiſtent, to the following purport, agreeable to the tranſlation given by Vitringa, and the preſent Biſhop of London. " Nevertheleſs there ſhall not be

* 1 Pet. ii. 9.

† 1 Sam. ii. 30.

dim-

dimneſs [or darkneſs] as in the time of her vexation or diſtreſs. He formerly debaſed [made light or vile] the land of Zebulon and Naphtali, but in the latter time he hath made it glorious, even [the land] by the way of the ſea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles. [For] The people that walked in darkneſs have ſeen a great light, &c."—Such was the afflicted and low ſtate of Galilee, previous to the coming of MESSIAH; ſuch was the exaltation and honour it derived from his appearance.

1. The land allotted to the tribes of Iſſachar, Zebulon, and Naphtali, was chiefly included in the province, which, upon a ſubſequent diviſion of the country, obtained the name of Galilee. The northern part of it, the inheritance of Naphtali, was the boundary or frontier towards Syria, and had been frequently vexed and afflicted, when the ſins of Iſrael brought the armies of their enemies upon them, as frontier countries uſually ſuffer moſt in times of invaſion and war. Particularly this part of the land, called Galilee of the Gentiles, was the firſt, and moſt immediately expoſed to the ravages of Tiglath-Pileſer and Sennacherib. And as the people

there were likewiſe more mixed with foreigners, and at the greateſt diſtance from the capital, Jeruſalem, on theſe accounts, Galilee was lightly eſteemed by the Jews themſelves. They thought *no prophet could ariſe in Galilee* *. It even prejudiced Nathanael againſt the firſt report he received of Jeſus as MESSIAH, that he lived, and was generally ſuppoſed (by thoſe who were content to be governed by popular rumour, without enquiring attentively for themſelves) to have been born in Galilee. He aſked, with an appearance of ſurprize, *Can any good thing come out of Nazareth* †? They were accounted a rude, unpoliſhed, provincial people. And therefore, when Peter would have denied any acquaintance with his Lord, he was diſcovered to be a Galilean ‡ by his dialect and manner of ſpeech.

2. This deſpiſed and leaſt valued part of the land of Iſrael, was the principal ſcene of MESSIAH's life and miniſtry. Inſomuch, that, as I have obſerved, he was ſuppoſed to have been born there. A miſtake which his enemies induſtriouſly ſupported and made the moſt of; for thoſe who could perſuade them-

* John vii. 52. † John i. 46. ‡ Mark xiv. 70.

ſelves

felves that it was fo in fact, would think themfelves juftified in rejecting his claim. It being one undeniable mark of MESSIAH, given by the prophet Micah, *that he was born in Bethlehem of Judah* *. He was, however, brought up at Nazareth, and lived for a time in Capernaum, towns in Galilee; but both of fo little repute, that had they not been connected with his hiftory, it is not probable that their names would have been tranfmitted to pofterity.

3. But by his refidence there, Galilee was honoured and ennobled. He himfelf declared, that on this account, *Chorazin, Bethfaida, and Capernaum* (though probably none of them were more than inconfiderable fifhing towns) *were exalted even to heaven* †. Thofe were highly privileged places which our Lord condefcended to vifit in perfon; fo likewife are thofe places where he is pleafed to fend his gofpel. I have obferved formerly, and I make no apology for repeating a truth fo very important, and fo little attended to, that *the glorious gofpel of the bleffed God* ‡, when faithfully preached, and thankfully received and improved, renders an obfcure village more

* Micah v. 2. † Matt. xi. 21—23 ‡ 1 Tim. i. 11.

honourable, and of more real conſequence, than the metropolis of a great empire, where this light ſhineth not. For what are the *dark places of the earth* *, however celebrated for numbers and opulence, for the monuments of ambition and arts, but habitations of cruelty, infatuation, and miſery!

4. Though Galilee was favoured with the ſcripture, and with ſynagogue worſhip; and the inhabitants were a people who profeſſed to know the God of Iſrael, it was a land of darkneſs at the time of MESSIAH's appearance. Though they were not idolaters, ignorance prevailed among them. The law and the prophets were read in the ſynagogues; but we may believe to little good purpoſe, while they were under the direction of perverſe teachers, who ſubſtituted the traditions of men for the commands of God. The ſingle circumſtance of keeping herds of ſwine, as the Gaderenes did, ſeems a proof, that the law of Moſes was but little regarded by them. They, as well as the people of Judea, were under the guidance of the Scribes and Phariſees in their religious concerns, who were, if I may uſe a modern phraſe, the clergy

* Pſal. lxxiv. 20.

of

of that time; and theſe, we are aſſured by him who knew their hearts, were generally corrupted; *blind, leaders of the blind.* Yet they were held in ignorant admiration, and implicitly ſubmitted to. From the character of the public miniſters of religion, we may, without great danger of miſtake, infer the character of the people who are pleaſed and ſatisfied with their miniſtrations. *As the diſciple cannot,* ordinarily, *be expected to be ſuperior to his Maſter* *; the religion of the Scribes may be taken as a ſtandard of that of the Galileans, who were inſtructed by them. Yet theſe were the people among whom MESSIAH chiefly converſed; ſo that his enemies ſtyled him a Galilean, and a Nazarene, as a mark of reproach and contempt. Many of his apoſtles, perhaps the moſt of them, were Galileans likewiſe. *He ſeeth not as men ſeeth* †. The moſt of his immediate followers while upon earth, were ſuch as men deſpiſed, on account of their ſituation, rank, or callings; publicans and ſinners, fiſhermen and Galileans. This was, among other reaſons, for the encouragement of the poor, the deſtitute, the deſpiſed, the miſerable, and the guilty,

* Luke vi. 40. † 1 Sam. xvi. 7.

in succeeding ages, who should desire to put their trust in his name, and to implore his mercy. To those who received him, he was the light, the true light; he relieved them from the ignorance, wickedness, and distress in which he found them. They, on their parts, bore testimony to him. They saw and acknowledged his glory. They felt his power, and devoted themselves to his service. Thus much for the literal sense.

II. But this prophecy is not to be restrained to the first and more immediate season of its accomplishment. The Lord speaks thus of MESSIAH in another place, *It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant, to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation to the ends of the earth* *. And there are many declarations of a like import. He is still *the light of the world* †, though no longer visible and conversant with men. By the influence and power of his Spirit, he is still present wherever his gospel is known. This his word of grace and truth he sends where he

* Isai. xlix. 6. † John viii. 12.

pleafes, and with a difcrimination, not unlike that which he obferved when he was upon earth. The gofpel is preached to the poor. Courts and palaces are feldom favoured with it. While he paffes by many great cities, many habitations of the wife and wealthy, he is known in villages and cottages. His condefcenfion and favour to thofe who are unnoticed by the world, cannot be too highly extolled. That the others are excluded from the fame benefits, is more properly to be afcribed to their obftinacy than to his will. They exclude themfelves. *He ftands at the door and knocks* *. His word is within their reach, his minifters are within their call. They might eafily enjoy every mean and help which the gofpel provides for finners if they pleafed, but they do not pleafe. They are either engaged in a round of fenfual pleafure, or engroffed by ftudies and perfuits, which poffefs their hearts, and fill up their thoughts and time, fo that they have neither leifure nor inclination to attend to the things which pertain to their peace. Inftead of inviting his gofpel to them, they too frequently employ their power and influence to difcountenance, and if

* Rev. iii. 20.

possible,

poſſible, to ſuppreſs it. They have their choice. The great and the gay will not receive his meſſage; it is therefore ſent to the poor, and to the wretched, and they will hear it. Yet as he viſited Jeruſalem in perſon, and taught there, ſo London likewiſe is favoured with the light of his goſpel. But alas, *How few believe the report?* They who do, experience the change deſcribed in my text. Their darkneſs is changed into marvellous light.

Mankind, till enlightened by the word and ſpirit of grace, are truly in a ſtate of darkneſs. Thick darkneſs is a vail which conceals from us, not only diſtant, but the neareſt objects. A man in the dark cannot perceive either friend or enemy; he may be in great danger, yet think himſelf in ſafety; or, if he thinks himſelf in danger, be unable to take any ſtep for his preſervation, from a want of light. Thus, though God be our maker and preſerver, though *in him we live, move, and have our being*, though we are ſurrounded with his preſence, and proofs of his wiſdom and goodneſs are before us wherever we turn our eyes; yet we live without him in the world. Equally ignorant we are of ourſelves, of the proper happineſs of our nature, or how it is

to

to be attained. We know neither the cauſe, the cure, nor the conſequences of our proneneſs to cleave to the duſt, and of placing our affection on inadequate and unſatisfying objects.

And if we ſuppoſe a perſon awakened to a conviction of the evil of ſin, and to underſtand that nothing leſs than the favour of God can make a rational and immortal creature happy, ſtill without the goſpel he *would be in darkneſs and the ſhadow of death.* His caſe may be compared to that of a perſon ſhipwrecked upon ſome deſert, inhoſpitable coaſt, ſuffering great horrors and anxiety, from his expoſedneſs to periſh by hunger, by enemies, or wild beaſts—who, if he ſaw, at no very great diſtance, an iſland, and was, by ſome means, informed and aſſured that iſland was the ſeat of ſafety, plenty, and pleaſure; and that if he was once there, his dangers would all ceaſe, and his utmoſt wiſhes be ſatisfied; ſtill, if there were neither bridge, nor boat, nor any means by which he might arrive thither, to know that happineſs was ſo near him, yet inacceſſible to him, would but aggravate his miſery, and make his deſpair more emphatically pungent. Miſerable, indeed,

deed, muſt we be, if we clearly perceived that only he, whoſe creatures we are, can make us happy; and that as ſinners we have forfeited his favour, and are utterly incapable of regaining it, if we were left under theſe views without any hope of relief. Such muſt have been our ſituation ſooner or later, if *God, who is rich in mercy*, had not himſelf provided the means of reconciliation. For though a hope of pardon is eaſily taken up by thoſe who are ignorant of the holineſs of God and the malignity of ſin, yet nothing but a declaration from himſelf, that there is forgiveneſs with him, can give peace to a truly awakened conſcience. But Jeſus diſpels this darkneſs, and *brings life and immortality to light by the goſpel*. For,

1. The office and agency of the Holy Spirit, ſo abſolutely neceſſary to make us duly ſenſible, either of our danger, or of the poſſibility of eſcaping it, is intirely the effect of his mediation. The ſoul of man, originally formed to be the temple of the living God, when defiled by ſin, was juſtly forſaken by its great inhabitant; and ſince the fall, anſwers the prophetical deſcription given of Babylon. *It is become the habitation of devils,*

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the hold of every foul ſpirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird *. If we aſk, as with good reaſon we may, How can the wiſe and holy God, *who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity*, and with whom evil cannot dwell, return to his ſanctuary thus polluted and profaned? an anſwer is afforded in that gracious promiſe, *I will ſprinkle clean water upon you and you ſhall be clean, from all your filthineſs, and from all your idols, will I cleanſe you; and I will take away the ſtony heart, and I will give you an heart of fleſh, and* (in order to this) *I will put my Spirit within you* †. But the ſource of this mercy, is his ſovereign love and purpoſe, to give the ſeed of the woman, his only Son, to be the mediator of ſinners. By his atonement to be manifeſted in due time, but which had a virtual influence from the beginning, the Holy Spirit returned to dwell with men.

2. His obedience unto death, when revealed by the Holy Spirit to the enlightened conſcience, affords a clear and ſatisfactory diſcovery of reconciliation with God: it ſhews, that on his part, every hindrance to the free exerciſe of mercy is thereby removed, the ho-

* Rev. xviii. 2. † Ezek. xxxvi. 25, 26.

nour

and introduced to the *fountain of living waters*. Or, to close with the beautiful image in my text, *The people who once walked in darkness and the region of the shadow of death, are translated into the kingdom of life and salvation* *.

How greatly are they to be pitied who reject the light of the gospel! It is true, they cannot see it; but it is equally true, they will not. But may I not hope, that this is a day of divine power, in which some of you shall be made a willing people. Do not reason against your own life, but repent and believe the gospel. The light shines around you, whether you perceive it or not; and it has an efficacy to open the eyes of the blind. Where the gospel is preached the Lord is present. If you call upon him he will hear, and you shall receive your sight. If the grace and the glory of the Saviour have hitherto made no impression upon your heart, you are spiritually blind. Could you be sensible of your disorder, the remedy is at hand. If now at last you are willing to seek him, he will be found of you. But if you deliberately prefer darkness, your state is awfully dangerous; and if you persist in your obstinacy, your

* Col. i. 13.

ruin

ruin is unavoidable. God is gracious and long-ſuffering, but he will not be mocked *. Humble yourſelf at once and implore his mercy, or elſe prepare to meet him in judgment. But be aſſured he will not meet you as a man. You muſt either bend or break. The Lord forbid that he ſhould ſay to any of you, in the great day of his appearance, *Depart from me, ye curſed, into everlaſting fire!*

* Gal. vi. 7.

SERMON IX.

CHARACTERS AND NAMES OF MESSIAH.

ISAIAH ix. 6.

For unto us a child is born, unto us a ſon is given; and the government ſhall be upon his ſhoulder: and his name ſhall be called Wonderful, Counſellor, the mighty God, the everlaſting Father, the Prince of peace.

SUCH was the triumphant exultation of the Old Teſtament church! Their nobleſt hopes were founded upon the promiſe of MESSIAH; their ſublimeſt ſongs were derived from the proſpect of his advent. By faith, *which is the ſubſtance of things hoped for*, they conſidered the gracious declarations of the faithful unchangeable God as already accompliſhed, though the actual performance reſpected a period, as yet, future and diſtant.

Eſpecially, as believers, under that diſpenſation, already felt the influence of the redemption, which MESSIAH was to conſummate in the fulneſs of time. It was the knowledge of his engagement on the behalf of ſinners, that gave life and ſignificancy to all the inſtitutions of the ceremonial law, which otherwiſe, though of divine appointment, would have been a heavy and burdenſome yoke*. Iſaiah therefore prepares this joyful ſong for the true ſervants of God, who lived in his time; and though it was a day of trial and rebuke, they were provided with a ſufficient compenſation for all their ſufferings, in being warranted to ſay, *Unto us a child is born, unto us a ſon is given; and the government ſhall be upon his ſhoulders*, &c.

This ancient ſong is ſtill new. It has been, and will be taken up from age to age, by the New Teſtament church, with ſuperior advantage. I truſt many of you underſtand it well, and rejoice in it daily. Men naturally look for ſomething wherein to rejoice and glory. Little reaſon have the wiſe † to glory in their ſuppoſed wiſdom, or the ſtrong in their fading ſtrength, or the rich in their

* Acts xv. 10. † Jer. ix. 23.

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tranſitory wealth; but this is a juſt and unfailing ground of glory to true Chriſtians, that *Unto us a child is born, unto us a ſon is given*, &c.

When a ſinner is enlightened by the Holy Spirit, to underſtand the character and offices of MESSIAH, his ability and willingneſs to ſave thoſe who are ready to periſh, and the happineſs of all who are brought into ſubjection to his gracious government; and when he begins to feel the cheering effects of faith in his name, then this ſong becomes his own, and exactly ſuits the emotions and gratitude of his heart. But many perſons will deſpiſe and pity him as a weak enthuſiaſt. And yet, perhaps, they do not think ſo unfavourably of the rapture of Archimedes, of whom it is related, that havimg ſuddenly diſcovered the ſolution of a difficult problem while he was bathing, he was ſo tranſported with joy, that he forgot his ſituation, ſprung inſtantly from the bath, and ran through the city crying, " I have found it, I have found it!" He is not uſually charged with madneſs on this account, though the expreſſion of his joy was certainly over-proportioned to the cauſe. The truth is, the world will allow of a vehemence approaching to extaſy,

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on almoſt any occaſion, but on that alone, which, above all others, will juſtify it. A perſon who would be thought deſtitute of taſte, if he was unaffected by the muſic to which this paſſage is ſet, would, at the ſame time, hazard his reputation for good ſenſe, with ſome judges, if he owned himſelf affected by the plain meaning of the words. Incompetent judges ſurely! who are pleaſed to approve of warmth and emotion of ſpirit, provided the object be trivial, and only condemn it in concerns of the greateſt importance! But, I truſt, the character of my auditory is very different, and that the moſt of you deſire to enter into the ſpirit of this paſſage, and to have a more lively ſenſe of your own intereſts in it. May the Lord grant your deſire, and accompany our meditations upon it with his power and bleſſing!

Every clauſe in this paſſage might furniſh ſubject for a long diſcourſe; but my plan will only permit me briefly to touch upon the ſeveral particulars, which will lead to a recapitulation or ſummary, of what has been already conſidered more largely concerning the perſon, offices, and glory of MESSIAH. We have,

I. His

I. His incarnation. *Unto us a child is born.* In our nature, born of a woman: *Unto us a ſon is given*, not merely a man-child, but, emphatically, *a ſon*, the Son of God. This was the moſt precious gift, the higheſt proof and teſtimony of divine love. The diſtinction and union of theſe widely diſtant natures, which conſtitute the perſon of Chriſt, the God-man, the Mediator, is, in the judgment and language of the apoſtle, the *great myſtery of godlineſs* *, the pillar and ground of truth. I ſhall not repeat what I have already offered on this point in the fifth ſermon. It is the central truth of revelation, which, like the ſun, diffuſes a light upon the whole ſyſtem, no part of which can be rightly underſtood without it. Thus the Lord of all humbled himſelf, to appear in the form of a ſervant, for the ſake of ſinners.

II. His exaltation. *The government ſhall be upon his ſhoulder.* In our nature he ſuffered, and in the ſame nature he reigns. When he had overcome the ſharpneſs, the ſting of death, he took poſſeſſion of the kingdom of glory as his own, and opened it to all who believe in him. Now we can ſay, He who

* 1 Tim. iii. 16.

governs in heaven and on earth, and whom all things obey, *is the child who was born, the ſon who was given for us.* Some ſubſequent paſſages will lead us, hereafter, to contemplate more directly the glory of the Redeemer's adminiſtration in the kingdoms of providence and grace. At preſent, therefore, I ſhall only obſerve, that the exaltation of the Redeemer, infers the dignity and ſecurity of the people who are united to him by faith. They have, in one reſpect, an appropriate honour, in which the angels cannot ſhare. Their beſt friend, related to them in the ſame nature, is ſeated upon the throne of glory. Since he *is for them, who can be againſt them?* What may they not expect, when he who has ſo loved them as to redeem them with his own blood, *has all power committed unto him, both in heaven and on earth!* For,

III. The names and characters here aſcribed to him, are not only expreſſive of what he is in himſelf, but of what he is engaged to be to them.

1. *His name ſhall be called Wonderful.* In another place the word is rendered *Secret* *. It is true of him in both ſenſes. He is

* Judges xiii. 18.

Wonder-

Wonderful in his perſon, obedience, and ſufferings; in his grace, government, and glory. So far as we underſtand his name, the revelation by which, as by a name, he is made known, we may, we muſt, believe, admire, and adore. But how limited and defective is our knowledge! His name is *Secret*. Who can by *ſearching find him out**? His greatneſs is incomprehenſible, his wiſdom untraceable, his fulneſs inexhauſtible, his power infinite. *No one knoweth the Son, but the Father?* But *they* have a true, though not an adequate knowledge of him, who truſt, love, and ſerve him. And in their view he is *Wonderful!* The apoſtle expreſſes the ſentiment of their hearts, when he ſays, *Yea, doubtleſs, I count all things but loſs and dung for the excellency of the knowledge of Chriſt Jeſus the Lord.*

2. Another of his names is *Counſellor*. The great councils of redemption, in which, every concern reſpecting the glory of God, and the ſalvation of ſinners, was adjuſted, were eſtabliſhed with him, and in him, before the foundation of the world. And he is our Counſellor or Advocate with the Father, who pleads our cauſe, and manages all our affairs

* Job xi. 7.

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in perfect righteoufnefs, and with infallible fuccefs. So that no fuit can poffibly mifcarry which he is pleafed to undertake. To him likewife we muft apply (and we fhall not apply in vain) for wifdom and direction, in all that belongs to our duty, and the honour of our profeffion in the prefent life; in all our difficulties, dangers, and cares, we muft look to him for guidance and fupport. This is to be wife unto falvation. His fecret is with them that confult him, fo that though the world may deem them weak and ignorant as babes (and he teaches them to think thus of themfelves) they have a cheering and practical knowledge of many important fubjects, which are entirely hidden from thofe who are wife and prudent in their own eyes.

3. *He is the mighty God.* Though in the office of Mediator, he acts in the character of a fervant, his perfections and attributes are truly divine. Only the mighty God, could make a provifion capable of anfwering the demands of the holy law, which we had tranfgreffed. Only the mighty God could be a fuitable Shepherd to lead millions of weak help-

helpless creatures to glory, through the many difficulties, dangers, and enemies they are exposed to in their passage. Add to this, the honour, dependance, and obedience, which this great Shepherd claims from his sheep, are absolute and supreme; and they would be guilty of idolatry, if they did not know that he is the *mighty God*. Though real Christians, who are enlightened and taught by the Holy Spirit may, and do, differ in their views and explanations of some revealed truths, I conceive they must be all agreed in this point. It is not only necessary to be known as the only solid foundation of a sinner's hope, but it immediately respects the object of divine worship. For if the Redeemer is not possessed of the incommunicable perfections of Deity, the New Testament in its most obvious and literal signification, would be chargeable, not only with countenancing, but with expressly teaching and enjoining idolatry.

4. Farther he shall be called *the Everlasting Father*. *He is not ashamed to call them brethren* *, having condescended to assume their human nature. But they are also his *children*. They are born into his family by the

* Heb. ii. 11.

effi-

efficacy of his own word and Spirit. From him they derive their ſpiritual life, being united to him by faith, and receiving from firſt to laſt out of his fulneſs. And he is an *everlaſting Father*. Our fathers, according to the fleſh, are ſubject to death. But his relation to them ſubſiſts unchangeably, and therefore they cannot be deſtitute; and he is thus, equally to them all. *They* live upon the earth, and are removed from it, in a long ſucceſſion of ages; but *He* is the Father of the everlaſting age, *the ſame yeſterday, to day, and for ever. All generations ſhall call him bleſſed.* To him, therefore, the apoſtle teaches us to apply that ſublime paſſage of the pſalmiſt, *Thou, Lord, in the beginning haſt laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of thy hands* *. *They ſhall periſh, but thou remaineſt; and they all ſhall wax old as doth a garment; and as a veſture ſhalt thou fold them up, and they ſhall be changed; but thou art the ſame, and thy years ſhall not fail* †.

5. Laſtly, He ſhall be called *the Prince of Peace*. Whoſe ſovereign prerogative it is, to *ſpeak peace to his people* ‡. And there is no peace, deſerving the name, but that which he

* Pſal. cii. 25—27. † Heb. i. 10—12. ‡ Pſal. lxxxv. 8.

be-

beſtows. The ſcripture expreſsly declares, *There is no peace to the wicked**. By whatever name we call that thoughtleſs ſecurity and inſenſibility, in which mankind generally live, while ignorant of God and of themſelves, we cannot allow it to be peace. It is the effect of blindneſs and hardneſs of heart; it will neither bear reflection nor examination. Can they be ſaid to poſſeſs peace, however fatally regardleſs they may be of futurity, who are at preſent under the dominion of reſtleſs, inſatiable, and inconſiſtent paſſions and appetites? But the kingdom of MESSIAH is a kingdom of peace, and in him, his happy ſubjects enjoy *a peace which paſſeth all underſtanding* †, ſuch as the world can neither give nor take away. He has made *peace by the blood of his croſs* ‡, for all that come unto God by him. Until they are in trouble and diſtreſs; until they feel the bitterneſs, and fear the conſequences of their ſins, and ſee the impoſſibility of helping themſelves, they will not apply to him; but whenever they do ſeek him, thus *weary and heavy laden*, he hears their prayer. Their minds, for a ſeaſon, are like the ſea in a ſtorm, they are diſtreſſed with

* Iſai. lvii. 21. † Phil. iv. 7. ‡ Col. i. 20.

guilt, fears, and temptations; but when He reveals his mighty name, and boundleſs grace to their hearts, and ſays, *Peace, be ſtill* *, there is a great calm. *Being juſtified by faith, they have peace with God, through our Lord Jeſus Chriſt.* He gives them peace likewiſe in a changing troubleſome world, by inviting, and enabling them to caſt all their cares upon him, and to truſt all their concerns in his hands, upon the aſſurance his word gives them, that he careth for them, and will manage and overrule every thing for their good. In proportion as their faith realizes his promiſes, they feel a compoſure and ſatisfaction. Knowing *that the hairs of their head are numbered*, that their afflictions, no leſs than their comforts, are tokens of his love, *that he will give them ſtrength according to their day, that he will be their guide and their guard even unto death*; they are not greatly moved by any events, or diſturbed by apprehenſions, becauſe their hearts are fixed †, truſting in the Lord. Farther, he teaches them (what can only be learnt of him) how to ſeek and maintain peace among men. His love ſubdues the power of ſelf, and forms them to a ſpirit of philan-

* Mark iv. 39. † Pſal. cxii. 7.

thropy

thropy and benevolence, which has often ſuch an effect, that they who diſlike them for their attachment to him and to his precepts, and would willingly ſpeak evil of them, are aſhamed, and put to ſilence, by their perſeverance in well-doing. Thus their peace increaſes as a river, which runs with a deeper and a broader ſtream as it approaches the ocean. For their peace is then ſtrongeſt and moſt unſhaken, when they draw near to death, and are upon the point of reſigning their ſouls into his hands. This is the time, when, if not before, the falſe peace of the worldling, will give way to terror and diſmay. *But mark the perfect man, and behold the upright, for the end of that man is peace* *. It muſt be allowed, that many of his people, through the power of temptation and remaining unbelief, have, at ſome ſeaſons, uncomfortable fears concerning a dying hour; but when the time of their diſmiſſion actually arrives, we ſeldom ſee them afraid of the ſummons. There is a ſtrength neceſſary to ſupport the ſoul at the approach of death, which is uſually withheld till the time of need. But then it is vouchſafed. They who have frequently acceſs to

* Pſal. xxxvii. 37.

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the beds of dying believers, can bear teſtimony, as eye-witneſſes, to the faithfulneſs of their Lord. How often have we ſeen them triumphing in the proſpect of immortality! as happy, in defiance of pain and ſickneſs, as we can well conceive it poſſible to be, while in the body, and as ſure of heaven, as if they were already before the throne.

Such is the character of MESSIAH! This is the God whom we adore; our almighty unchangeable friend! His greatneſs and goodneſs, his glory and his grace, when once known, fix the heart no more to rove; and fill it with admiration, gratitude, and deſire. From hence ſpring a cheerful, unreſerved obedience to his commands, and a deliberate voluntary ſubmiſſion to his holy will. For his people do not ſerve him, or yield to him by conſtraint; at leaſt, it is only the pleaſing conſtraint of love, which makes their duty their delight; and their burden and grief is, that they can ſerve him no better.

May we be all thus minded. I dare not hope it is ſo with us all at preſent. But this is the day of his grace. For this cauſe he came into the world, that he might draw many hearts

hearts to himself *. And for this purpose he favours us with his gospel, by which he still says, *Look unto me and be ye saved* †, *Come unto me, and I will give you rest* ‡. To be found among his faithful followers, in the great day when he shall come to judge the world, is the one thing, which, above all others, deserves our solicitude.

Hear then his voice to day. Perhaps you are apprized of the necessity of a change of heart and life, at some future period, in order to die safely. Such a change is equally necessary, if you wish to live comfortably. While you are unfit to die, you can have no true enjoyment of life. It were easy to prove at large, that procrastination is highly dangerous. Admitting, that according to your present feelings, you really think yourself determined to seek the Lord at some future time, do you consider how many uncertainties you presume upon? Are you sure that you shall not be suddenly cut off, by an unexpected and unthought of stroke; or visited by a fever, which may quickly bring you into a state of delirium or stupefaction, and render

* John xii. 32. † Isai. xlv. 22. ‡ Matt. xi. 28.

your projected repentance impracticable? yea, it will in any circumstances be impracticable, unless God is pleased to influence your mind by his good Spirit. If you grieve this Spirit *now*, by resisting his operations, what reason have you to expect that he will *then* return? Do we not see many instances of what the poet, with great propriety, calls, *A slow sudden death?* How many people, while pining away under the power of incurable disease, amuse themselves with the hope of recovery to the last gasp; and though their acquaintance read death in their countenance for weeks or months, in defiance of such repeated and long-continued warnings, they die as suddenly, with respect to their own apprehensions, as if killed by lightning. Tremble lest such be your last end, if you trifle with God, who now calls you, by his gospel, to seek him to day, *while it is called to day.*

But I would lead you to consider your delay, not only as dangerous, but as unreasonable. Why are you afraid of being happy too soon? What strange and hard thoughts have you of God, if you suppose you can find more pleasure in living, according to your own wills,

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than in obedience to his commands! Can the world give you such peace and satisfaction as I have attempted to descpibe? Do you think a real persuasion that God is your friend, and that heaven will be your home, will spoil the relish of your earthly enjoyments, or make your lives uncomfortable? What hard thing does the Lord require of you, that you are so unwilling to comply? If we set aside, for a moment, the consideration of a future state, and a final judgment, yet even in a temporal view you would be a great gainer, if your spirit and your conduct were regulated by the gospel. What heart-breaking troubles, what losses, contests, pains of body, and remorse of conscience, would some of you have avoided, if you had believed and obeyed the word of God! What distresses may your head-strong passions soon plunge you into, if you presume to go on in your sins! For that the way of transgressors is hard, is not only declared in scripture, but proved by the history and observation of every day. Forsake the foolish, therefore, and live. And while the door of mercy is still open before you, pray to him who is able to bless you, indeed, by delivering

you from the guilt, and from the power of your iniquities. Left, if being *often reproved**, and ftill *hardening your hearts, you fhould fuddenly be deftroyed, and that without remedy.*

* Prov. xxix. 1.

SER-

SERMON X.

THE ANGEL'S MESSAGE AND SONG.

LUKE ii. 8—14.

There were in the ſame country ſhepherds, abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flocks by night. And lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord ſhone round about them, and they were ſore afraid. And the angel ſaid unto them, Fear not; for behold I bring unto you good tidings of great joy, which ſhall be unto all people. For unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Chriſt the Lord. And this ſhall be a ſign unto you: Ye ſhall find the babe wrapped in ſwaddling clothes, lying in a manger. And ſuddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly hoſt, praiſing God, and ſaying, Glory be to God in the higheſt, on earth peace, goodwill towards men.

THE gratification of the *Great*, the *Wealthy*, and the *Gay*, was chiefly consulted in the late exhibitions in Weſtminſter-Abbey. But notwithſtanding the expence of the preparations, and the ſplendid appearance of the auditory, I may take it for granted, that the ſhepherds, who were honoured with the firſt information of the birth of MESSIAH, enjoyed at free coſt, a much more ſublime and delightful entertainment. How poor and trivial is the moſt ſtudied magnificence and brilliancy of an earthly court, compared with that effulgence of glory which ſurrounded the ſhepherds? The performers of this Oratorio, if I may be allowed the expreſſion, were a multitude of the heavenly hoſt. And though I do not ſuppoſe that the angel delivered his meſſage in the cadence, which we call *Recitative*, I have no doubt but the chorus was a *Song*, ſweetly melodious as from bleſt voices. A ſong which the redeemed and the angels of the Lord, are ſtill ſinging before the throne. A new ſong *. A ſong which will be always new. We are made acquainted with the ſubject, yea, with the very words of this ſong. May our hearts

* Rev. v. 9.

be ſuitably affected by the conſideration of them to day! The melody and harmony of heaven are far above our conceptions. The muſic of that happy land has no dependance upon the vibrations of the air, or the admirable ſtructure of the human ear. But we have reaſon to believe, there is, in the world of light and love, ſomething analogous to what we call muſic, though different in kind, and vaſtly ſuperior in effect, to any ſtrains that can be produced by the moſt exquiſite voices, or inſtruments, upon earth. As we readily judge the glory of an angel to be unſpeakably more excellent, both in kind, and in degree, than any thing that is deemed glorious among mortals.

To conſider this paſſage at large would require many diſcourſes. I ſhall confine myſelf at preſent to a few brief reflections, on the circumſtances of this heavenly viſion, the meſſage of the angel, and the concluding chorus or ſong.

I. The circumſtances.

1. *Lo, an angel came upon them, &c.* Suddenly, when they had no expectation of ſuch a viſit, without any thing that might previouſly engage their attention, all at once, like

a flash of lightning, a glory shone around them, and an angel appeared. We do not wonder that they were impressed with fear. We live near, perphaps, in the midst of, an invisible world, full of great and wonderful realities, which, yet, by too many persons, are considered and treated as non-entities, because they are not perceived by our bodily senses. But the scripture assures us of the fact; and to reject this testimony, because it is not confirmed by our senses, is no less irrational and unphilosophical, than impious. A man born blind, can have no more conception of light and colours, than we have of what passes in the world of spirits. And a nation of blind men, if there were such a nation, would probably treat a seeing person as a visionary madman, if he spoke to them of what he saw. But he would be sure of his own perceptions, though he could not satisfy the enquiries and cavils of the blind. Our senses are accommodated to our present state; but there may be a multitude of objects, as real in themselves, and as near to us, as any that we behold with our eyes; of which, we, for want of suitable faculties, can have no idea. To deny this, and to make our senses the

the criteria of the exiftence of things, which are not within their reach, is exactly fuch an abfurdity, as a blind man would be guilty of, who fhould deny the poffibility of a rainbow, becaufe he never heard it nor felt it. However, *Faith is the evidence of things not feen.* And they who believe the word of God, cannot doubt of the exiftence of an invifible ftate and invifible agents. The barrier between the inhabitants of that ftate and us, is too ftrong to be paffed; for the will of the great Creator feems to be the barrier. Otherwife it is probable they could eafily furprize us, fince, upon fpecial occafions, they have been permitted to difcover themfelves. We have a natural dread of fuch vifitants, even though they fhould appear to us, as they did to the fhepherds, as meffengers of peace and mercy from God. Yet we muft fhortly mingle with them. Death will introduce us into the world of fpirits; and what we fhall then meet with, what *Beings* will be ready to accoft us upon our firft entrance into that unknown, unchangeable ftate, who can fay? It deferves our ferious thought. We are now encompaffed by the objects of fenfe, but we muft foon be feparated from them all. We

live

live in a crowd, but we muſt die alone. Happy are they, who, like Stephen, ſhall be able to commend their departing ſpirits into the hands of Jeſus! He is Lord of all worlds, and has the keys of hades, of the inviſible ſtate.

2. The angel ſpoke. The goſpel was preached by an angel to Zecharias, to the virgin mother of MESSIAH, now to the ſhepherds; and, perhaps, to none but theſe. The angel, who appeared to Cornelius, ſaid nothing to him of Jeſus, but only directed him to ſend for Peter *. The glorious goſpel of the bleſſed God, with reſpect to its dignity, depth, and importance, may ſeem a fitter theme for the tongue of an angel than of a man; but angels never ſinned, and though they might proclaim its excellency, they could not, from experience, ſpeak of its efficacy. In this reſpect ſinful worms are better qualified to preach to others, concerning him by whom they have, themſelves, been healed and ſaved. Their weakneſs, likewiſe, is better ſuited to ſhew that the influence and ſucceſs of the goſpel, is wholly owing to the power of God. It has, therefore, pleaſed God to *put this trea-*

* Acts x. 4, 5.

ſure

ſure into earthen veſſels, and to commit the miniſtry of his word, not to angels, but to men. They whom he is pleaſed to employ in this office, however weak and unworthy in themſelves, derive an honour and importance from the meſſage entruſted to them, and are ſo far worthy of the ſame attention, as if an angel from heaven ſpoke. They are ſinful men, and have reaſon to think humbly of themſelves: nor ſhould they, as the ſervants of a ſuffering, crucified Maſter, either wonder or complain if they meet with unkindneſs from thoſe whom they wiſh to ſerve; but they may *magnify their office* *, and it is at the peril of their hearers to deſpiſe it. What the world accounts in us *the fooliſhneſs of preaching*, is made to thoſe who ſimply receive it, *the wiſdom and power of God*. To others, even angels would preach in vain. They *who hear not Moſes and the prophets*, who ſubmit not to the ordinary methods and means of grace which God has appointed, *would not be perſuaded, though one ſhould riſe from the dead*.

3. The angel was ſent with the moſt intereſting news that could be made known to mankind; not to Cæſar, or to Herod, or to

* Rom. xi. 13.

the High Prieſt, but to obſcure and lowly ſhepherds. *The Lord ſeeth not as man ſeeth*, the petty diſtinctions that obtain among men are not regarded by him. He is equally near to them that fear him in every ſituation of life, as the ſun ſhines, as freely and fully, upon a cottage as upon a palace. Theſe ſhepherds, were, doubtleſs, of the number of the happy few, who in that time of degeneracy, were waiting and longing *for the conſolation of Iſrael*. The heads of the Jewiſh people found their conſolation in their rank and wealth, and in the reſpect paid them by the vulgar. Theſe things uſually add to the idea of ſelf-importance, and feed thoſe tempers which are moſt diſpleaſing to the Lord, and which indiſpoſe the mind to the reception of the goſpel, or to any due enquiry concerning it. And thus, in fact, from age to age, it has generally *been hidden from the wiſe and the great, and revealed unto babes*. The magi, or wiſe men, who lived in the Eaſt, where the knowledge of aſtronomy obtained, but where the ſcripture was not known, were guided to MESSIAH by the appearance of a new ſtar or meteor. The ſhepherds, who were acquainted with the prophecies concerning MESSIAH, were in-

formed of their accomplishment by an angel. Thus the Lord was pleased to suit the different manner of making known his will, to the previous situation of the persons.

II. The message of the angel, though concise, was comprehensive and full. It contained, The fact, *Unto you is born this day*—The place, *In the city of David*, that is, in Bethlehem, so called, because David likewise had been born there *—The office of MESSIAH, *A Saviour*—His name, honour, and character, *Christ or the Anointed*; *The Lord*, the head and king of Israel, and of the church, the Lord of all. I do but recite these particulars now, as they will repeatedly offer to our consideration in the series of subjects before me. The description of the state in which they would find him, was such, as could only be reconciled to his titles and honours, by that simple faith, which, without vain reasoning, acquiesces in the declarations of God. For how unlikely would it seem to a meerly human judgment, that the Saviour of sinners, the promised MESSIAH, the Lord of all, should be *a babe wrapped in swaddling-clothes, and lying in a manger.* Yet thus it

* Luke ii. 4.

was. *Though rich* in himſelf, *he became poor for our ſakes* *. On this account, as the ſcripture had foretold, *he was deſpiſed and rejected of men.* Though he came to his own, as a Lord or maſter to his own houſe; yet, coming in this manner, his own profeſſed ſervants, who pretended that they were longing and waiting for him, ſlighted and oppoſed him; preferred a notorious malefactor to him, and put him to death as an impoſtor and blaſphemer. But the ſhepherds reaſoned not through unbelief, and therefore they were not ſtagggered; they obeyed the meſſage, they went, they ſaw, they believed.

The ſeeming repugnance between the greatneſs of MESSIAH's claims, and the ſtate of humiliation in which he appeared when upon earth, was the great ſtumbling-block then, and continues to be ſo at this day. Becauſe he ſtooped ſo low, and made himſelf of no reputation, too many ſtill refuſe to acknowledge his divine character. But they who are willing to be taught by the word and Spirit of God, ſee a beauty and propriety in his ſubmitting to be born in a ſtable, and to

* 2 Cor. viii. 9.

live

live as a poor man, deſtitute of houſe or property. Hereby he poured contempt upon worldly pomp and vanity, ſanctified the ſtate of poverty to his followers, and ſet them an encouraging example to endure it with cheerfulneſs. They, like the ſhepherds and his firſt diſciples, are delivered from their natural prejudices, and are enabled *to behold his glory*, through the vail of his outward humiliation, *as the glory of the only begotten of the Father.* And his condeſcenſion in *becoming poor for their ſakes, that they through his poverty might be made rich*, affects their hearts with admiration and gratitude.

But though too many, who are governed by the ſpirit and maxims of this world, are far from admiring his love, in aſſuming our nature under thoſe circumſtances, which, from his infancy to his death, expoſed him to the contempt of his enemies, it is otherwiſe thought of in yonder world of light. For we read, that when the angel had declared, to the ſhepherds, the glad-tidings, a multitude of the heavenly hoſt expreſſed their joy, by a ſong, which is the next ſubject that offers to our conſideration.

III.

III. Their higheſt praiſe was excited by a view of the effects which this unexampled love would produce.

1. *Glory to God in the higheſt.* In the higheſt heaven, in the higheſt degree, for this higheſt inſtance of his mercy. At the creation theſe *morning-ſtars ſung for joy* *. But redemption was a greater work than they had yet ſeen, and a work, by which his goodneſs, wiſdom, and power would be ſtill more abundantly magnified. The glory of God, the exhibition of his adorable perfections, to the view of intelligent creatures, is the laſt and higheſt end of all his works. Nor would it be worthy of the infinite eternal God, in compariſon with whoſe immenſity, the aggregate of all created good is no more than a point compared with the univerſe, or a ſingle ray of light compared with the ſun, to propoſe any thing ſhort of his own glory, as the ultimate, final cauſe of his deſigns. And in proportion as any finite intelligences, are conformed to the will of their Creator, and impreſſed with a ſenſe of his pre-eminence, their higheſt end and aim will be the ſame with his. If, therefore, we compare the

* Job xxxviii. 7.

glory

glory of God and the good of his creatures together, we may refer to them what our Lord was pleaſed to declare of the two great commandments. The former is incomparably the firſt and greateſt of his ends; the ſecond, in its proper place and ſubordination, is like unto it, and inſeparably connected with it, or rather derived from it. The former is, if I may ſo ſpeak, the eſſential difference of the divine operations; the latter, ſo far as conſiſtent with it, is the reſult of a glorious and efficacious property of his conſummate excellence. In the redemption of fallen man, both are diſplayed to the higheſt advantage. *Glory to God in the higheſt, and on earth peace, good-will towards man.*

The glory of his *goodneſs*, this ſhines bright in the capacities and happineſs he has communicated to angels; but it ſhines with greater brightneſs in the mercy afforded to mankind. Whether we conſider the objects who are ſinners, rebels, and enemies; or his purpoſe in their favour, not only to reſtore the life they had forfeited, but to beſtow it more abundantly *, with reſpect to title, ſecurity, and honour; or laſtly, and principally,

* John x. 10.

the mean, by which, their deliverance from everlafting mifery, and their poffeffion of everlafting happinefs is procured; and which could only be procured by the humiliation and death of the Son of his love.

The glory of his *wifdom*, in adjufting the demands of his holinefs, juftice, and truth, with the purpofes of his mercy. In providing fuch a method for the exercife of his mercy, as renders his difpleafure againft fin more confpicuous by pardoning, than by punifhing it. In abafing the finner's pride, by the very confiderations which infpire his hope and confidence; fo that while he confeffes himfelf unworthy of the very air that he breathes, he is encouraged and warranted to claim a participation in all the bleffings of grace and glory. And finally, in propofing motives, which, when rightly underftood, are always found fufficient to influence the heart, even though it has been habitually hardened in fin, long deaf to the voice of reafon, confcience, and intereft, and equally unaffected by the judgments or the mercies of God, till enlightened to perceive the excellency of the gofpel.

The

The glory of his *power*. In making all the acts of free agents, through a long succession of ages, subservient to this great purpose, not excepting those who most laboured to obstruct it; in changing the disposition of the sinner, however obstinate; and in carrying on his work of grace, when once begun, in such feeble inconsistent creatures as men are; in defiance of all difficulties and opposition arising from within, or without.

These are subjects which *the angels desire to look into* *, which fill the most exalted intelligences with admiration. The glory of God was manifest, was celebrated in the highest heavens, when MESSIAH was born of a woman.

2. The great design and effect of his appearance with regard to mankind, is peace. *On earth peace*. Man, as a fallen creature, is in a state of war and rebellion against his Maker. He has renounced his allegiance and dependence, is become his own end. He is now against God, disobedient to his laws, and disaffected to his government. And his conscience, if not stupified and cauterized by frequent resistance of conviction, suggests,

* 1 Pet. i. 12.

that God is againſt him. He feels he is not happy here, he fears he ſhall be miſerable hereafter. This apprehenſion ſtrengthens his averſion from God. And, indeed, without an expreſs aſſurance from the Lord himſelf whom he has offended, that there is forgiveneſs with him, he would not only fear, but ſink into deſpair, if he rightly underſtood the horrid enormity of a ſtate of alienation from the bleſſed God. But infinite wiſdom and mercy have provided, and propounded a method, by which the honour of the divine perfections and government are ſecured, and pardon and peace vouchſafed to rebels. *God was in Chriſt reconciling the world unto himſelf.* The knowledge of this mercy, when revealed to the ſinner's heart, ſubdues his enmity, conſtrains him to throw down his arms, and to make an unreſerved ſubmiſſion and ſurrender of himſelf; forms him to a temper of love and confidence, and diſpoſes him to habitual and cheerful obedience. Now *mercy and truth are met together, righteouſneſs and peace have kiſſed each other**; and God is glorified in the higheſt, for peace proclaimed upon the earth.

* Pſal. lxxxv. 10.

The

The expreſſion of *good-will towards men*, ſeems to riſe upon the former. Not only peace, but acceptance and adoption in the Beloved. Sinners, who believe in the Son of God, are not merely delivered from the condemnation they have deſerved, but are united to their Saviour; conſidered as one with him, his children, the members of his body, and made partakers of his life, and his glory. God is their portion, and heaven is their home. The Lord's ſatisfaction in this, as the greateſt of all his works, is expreſſed by the prophet in ſuch aſtoniſhing terms of condeſcenſion, as ſurpaſs our utmoſt conceptions; and we can only ſay, *Lord, what is man that thou art thus mindful of him!* We believe, admire, and adore. *The Lord thy God in the midſt of thee is mighty: He will ſave, he will rejoice over thee with joy: he will reſt in his love, he will rejoice over thee with ſinging* *.

Aſſuredly this ſong of the heavenly hoſt is not the language of our hearts by nature. We once ſought our pleaſure and happineſs in a very different way. We were indifferent to the glory of God, and ſtrangers to his peace. And ſome of us are ſtill blind to the

* Zeph. iii. 17.

excellencies of the gofpel, and deaf to its gracious invitations. But we muft not expect to fing with the great company of the redeemed hereafter, before the throne of glory, unlefs we learn, and love, their fong while we are here *. They who attain to the inheritance of the faints in light, are firft made meet for it in the prefent life, and in this way. They believe the teftimony of the fcripture refpecting their own guilt, unworthinefs, and helpleffnefs; then they receive the record which God has given of his Son. They renounce *all confidence in the flefh* †; they rejoice in Chrift Jefus, and from his fulnefs they derive grace to worfhip God in the fpirit. A fenfe of their obligations to the Saviour, difpofes them to praife him now, as they *can*; and they rejoice in hope of feeing him ere long as he is, and that then they fhall praife him, as they *ought*. For heaven itfelf, as defcribed in the word of God, could not be a ftate of happinefs to us, unlefs we are like-minded with the apoftle, to *account all things lofs and dung for the excellency of the knowledge of Chrift Jefus our Lord.*

* Rev. xiv. 3. † Phil. iii. 3.

SER-

SERMON XI.

MESSIAH'S ENTRANCE INTO JERUSALEM.

ZECH. ix. 9, 10.

Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; ſhout O daughter of Jeruſalem, behold thy king cometh unto thee: he is juſt and having ſalvation, lowly and riding upon an aſs, and upon a colt the fole of an aſs.—And he ſhall ſpeak peace unto the heathen.

THE narrowneſs and littleneſs of the mind of fallen man, are ſufficiently conſpicuous in the idea he forms of magnificence and grandeur. The pageantry and parade of a Roman triumph, or of an eaſtern monarch, as deſcribed in hiſtory, exhibit him to us in what, he himſelf accounts, his beſt eſtate. If you ſuppoſe him ſeated in an imperial carriage, arrayed in ſplendid apparel,

 wear-

wearing a crown or tiara, ornamented with jewels, preceded and followed by a long train of guards and attendants, ſurrounded by the unmeaning acclamations of ignorant multitudes, you ſee the poor worm at the ſummit of his happineſs. He has no conception of any thing greater than this. And the ſpectators are generally of the ſame mind. They admire, and they envy, his lot. And there is hardly a perſon in the crowds around him, but would be very glad to take his place were it practicable. Yet this great little creature would ſurely be mortified, if, in the height of his ſelf-complacence, he could conſider, that he had the very ſame regard for a pre-eminence in finery, the ſame deſire to be admired and envied, and felt the ſame kind of ſatisfaction in diſtinction above his fellows, when he was a child of ten years old. He is in effect a child ſtill, only he has changed his play-things, and now acts upon a larger ſcale, but with the ſame trifling and contracted views.

How different was MESSIAH's entry into Jeruſalem foretold in this prophecy; the accompliſhment of which, we read in the evangeliſts! And how differently was he affected

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by the objects around him! He poured contempt upon the phantom of human glory. This *King of kings and Lord of lords, was meek and lowly, riding upon an afs's colt* *. And though a fecret divine influence conftrained the multitude to acknowledge his character; and, with fome accommodation to the cuftoms of the times, *to ftrew their garments in the way*, as they proclaimed the king who came in the name of Jehovah, yet he appeared unmoved by their applaufe. Had the hiftory of Jefus, like thofe which we have of Socrates or Cyrus, been merely the work of a human writer, ambitious to adorn a favourite character with the moft fplendid qualities of a philofopher or a hero, we fhould never have known how his mind was engaged in this fituation. The Saviour muft be divine, his hiftorian muft be infpired, the fact muft be true, for man could not have invented fuch a circumftance, that this meek and lowly Saviour took no notice of the zeal and homage of his friends, becaufe his heart was filled with compaffion for his enemies who were thirfting for his blood. For it was then, amidft the acclamation of his difciples, that

* Luke xix. 35—38.

he beheld the city and wept over it, while he foretold the evils which the rejection of him would bring upon it. *Oh that thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things belonging to thy peace! But now they are hidden from thine eyes.*

An angel proclaimed his birth to the shepherds; and wise men from the East paid such attention to the new-born Saviour, that the jealousy of Herod was excited, and attempts made to destroy him. But this wonderful infant was brought up in a state of obscurity, in a place of no repute, and known by no higher description than that of *The carpenter's son.* In the course of his ministry he appeared and was treated as a poor man, he had no certain dwelling-place, he submitted to receive supplies, for his support, from the contributions of a few of his followers, for the most of them were poor like himself. And though he wrought many wonderful works for the relief of the necessitous and miserable, he admitted no alteration in his own external state, but was content to be poor and despised, for our sakes, to the end of his life. I think the only occasion on which he permitted a public acknowledgment of his person

perſon and character, was, when he fulfilled this prophecy. And ſtill he was the ſame meek and lowly Saviour. As his kingdom was not of this world, neither were there any marks of human grandeur in his proceſſion. He approached Jeruſalem, attended, indeed, by a concourſe of people, but riding upon an aſs, and weeping for his enemies.

The paſſage of the *Meſſiah* which follows the chorus of the heavenly hoſt, is taken from theſe verſes. It does not include the whole of them. In one clauſe there is a ſmall alteration in the expreſſion, but it does not affect the ſenſe. Inſtead of, *He is juſt having ſalvation*, it is, *He is a righteous Saviour.*

We may notice,

I. The prophet's addreſs. *To the daughter of Zion and Jeruſalem.*

II. The exhortation to joy. *Rejoice and ſhout.*

III. The cauſe aſſigned for this joy. *Thy king cometh.*

IV. The characters of the king. *A righteous Saviour.*

V. His great deſign. *To ſpeak peace to the heathen.*

I.

I. *Zion and Jerusalem*, are indifferently used as emblems of the church, or professing, people of God. When they occur together, as here, contradistinguished from each other, Zion, the city of David, the seat of government, and of the temple-worship, may denote the principal persons of the ecclesiastical and civil state; and Jerusalem may be expressive of the people at large, the daughters of a place, signifying, according to the Hebrew idiom, the inhabitants. They boasted that they were the Lord's peculiar people, they had the prophecies and promises concerning MESSIAH in their hands, and were professedly expecting and waiting for his appearance. They are therefore called upon to rejoice in it. But when he actually came, though *he came to his own*, to his own nation, city, and temple; his own people, to whose affection and allegiance he had the justest claim, *received him not* *. But there were a few who truly waited for him, as the hope and consolation of Israel, at the time of his birth; and many more were afterwards convinced by his gracious words and works, that *he only had the words of eternal life*, and became his followers.

* John i. 11.

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By their acknowledged principles, they were all bound to acknowledge *that* prophet whom Mofes had foretold, *God would raife up among them like unto himfelf**; that is, to be, as he had been, a lawgiver, to inftitute a new difpenfation of the true religion; and their refufal involved them, as a nation, in the punifhment, which, Mofes had likewife denounced againft thofe who fhould refufe to hearken to him. Thus their peculiar advantage in poffeffing a divine revelation, while the reft of mankind were left ignorant of the will of God, proved an aggravation of their guilt, and rendered their obftinacy more inexcufable, and their condemnation more fevere. I am bound to take every opportunity of noticing the ftriking parallel in this refpect, between the Jewifh nation in our Saviour's time, and the nations, who, fince that period, have admitted the New Teftament as a revelation from God. By affuming the Chriftian name, and fo far calling the Saviour Lord, while they reject the fpirit and defign of the gofpel, and treat the minifters of it with neglect or contempt, they tread in the fteps, and fhare in the guilt, of thofe who pretended to

* Deut. xviii. 15—19. Acts vii. 37.

expect

expect MESSIAH, and yet crucified him when he appeared among them. In perſon, he could be crucified but once, but the ſcripture ſpeaks of thoſe who *crucify the Son of God afreſh, and put him to open ſhame.* How far this is the caſe of the perſons who can bear to hear of his paſſion and his kingdom, when made the ſubject of a muſical entertainment, but upon no other occaſion, deſerves their ſerious conſideration.

II. The exhortation can only be complied with by thoſe who are ſenſible of their need of a Saviour, and his authority and ability to ſave. To theſe the prophet brings a joyful meſſage, and they will *rejoice and ſhout.* The joy of harveſt *, and of the victors in war, when dividing the ſpoil of the vanquiſhed, is celebrated with ſhouting. But ſinners, who, by the knowledge of MESSIAH, are delivered from going down into the pit, from the dominion of the powers of darkneſs, and are tranſlated into the kingdom of God, experience a joy far ſuperior, in kind and degree, to any ſatisfaction that temporal things can afford. It is *a joy unſpeakable, and full of glory* †. Jeſus, when known and received

* Iſai. ix. 3.

† 1 Pet. i. 8.

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by faith, is, in the higheſt ſenſe, light to thoſe who ſat in darkneſs, health to the ſick, food to the hungry, and reſt to the weary ſoul. Thus many rejoiced in his goodneſs when he was upon earth, and he ſtill has a people, and will have to the end of time, who do and ſhall rejoice in him upon theſe accounts, though every ſpring of temporal joy ſhould be dried up. They who know his name, and put their truſt in him, are warranted to appropriate thoſe ſtrong expreſſions of another prophet, *Although the fig-tree ſhall not bloſſom, neither ſhall fruit be in the vine, the labour of the olive ſhall fail, and the fields ſhall yield no meat, the flock ſhall be cut off from the fold, and there ſhall be no herd in the ſtalls: yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my ſalvation* *.

III. The ground and cauſe of this joy is aſſigned. *Thy king cometh.* MESSIAH is a king. This title he avowed to Pilate †, by whoſe order it was fixed over him upon his croſs. That this was not a ſlight and arbitrary circumſtance, but providential and important, we may, I think, infer from the care taken by the evangeliſts, to proſerve the re-

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II. The exhortation can only be complied with by those who are sensible of their need of a Saviour, and his authority and ability to save. To these the prophet brings a joyful message, and they will *rejoice and shout.* The joy of harvest *, and of the victors in war, when dividing the spoil of the vanquished, is celebrated with shouting. But sinners, who, by the knowledge of MESSIAH, are delivered from going down into the pit, from the dominion of the powers of darkness, and are translated into the kingdom of God, experience a joy far superior, in kind and degree, to any satisfaction that temporal things can afford. It is *a joy unspeakable, and full of glory* †. Jesus, when known and received

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* Hab. iii. 17, 18. † Mark xv. 2.

membrance of it, for it is recorded by them all. He is, indeed, King of kings; King and Lord of nations; King of worlds; but he is here ſpoken of as King of Zion. The kingdom he came to eſtabliſh upon earth is not of this world, nor like the kingdoms of the world. The maxims, language, intereſts, and aims of it, are peculiar to itſelf. His power and providence rule over all, but he is only known, admired, and willingly obeyed by the ſubjects of his ſpiritual kingdom, who, though they are *in* the world, are not *of* it, *but ſtrangers and pilgrims upon earth.* Their * πολιτευμα, their true citizenſhip, is in heaven. Theſe are his peculiar people. And though they partake with others in the changes and trials incident to this mortal life, and have their ſeveral departments and duties aſſigned them according to his will, as members of ſociety, and it does not yet appear what they ſhall be †, they are even now the children and ſervants of the Lord, and he manifeſts himſelf to them as he does not to others. Happy are theſe his ſubjects who dwell under his ſhadow. He rules them, not with that rod of iron by which he bruiſes

* Phil. ii. 20. † 1 John iii. 2.

and breaks the power of his enemies, but with his golden ſceptre of love. He reigns by his own right, and by their full and free conſent, in their hearts. He reigns upon a throne of grace, to which they have, at all times, acceſs; and from whence they receive in anſwer to their prayers, mercy and peace, the pardon of all their ſins, grace to help in every time of need, and a renewed ſupply anſwerable to all their wants, cares, ſervices, and conflicts. So that though they are ſurrounded with ſnares, and fiercely oppoſed by many enemies, they cannot be overpowered, for the Lord himſelf is their king and their Saviour. We have,

IV. Two characters of this king. *He is juſt having ſalvation*, or, as it is in the paſſage of the *Meſſiah*, *He is a righteous Saviour*.

1. *He is righteous.* His kingdom is founded in righteouſneſs. It is the effect and reward of his obedience unto death, by which he made an end of ſin, and brought in an everlaſting righteouſneſs. As his people receive and expect all from his hand, ſo likewiſe for his ſake. Such is his command, and ſuch is his promiſe. *If ye ſhall aſk any thing*

in my name, I will do it *. In pleading their cauſe, and managing their concerns, he is their righteous advocate. And, therefore, becauſe his interceſſion is founded upon a righteous ſtipulation, which he has completely fulfilled, he does not ſay, *Father*, I aſk, but, *I will, that thoſe whom thou haſt given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory* †.

2. He is a *Saviour*. Having ſalvation in himſelf; yea, *He is their ſalvation* ‡. His wiſdom, power, compaſſion, and determined purpoſe, are all engaged to ſave them fully, freely, and for ever. To ſave them from guilt, from ſatan, and from ſin, through all the dangers and trials of this life. To ſave them to the uttermoſt, till he fixes them finally, out of the reach of all evil, and puts them in poſſeſſion of all the happineſs of which their natures are capable, in a conformity to his own image, and the enjoyment of unclouded, uninterrupted communion with God.

V. His great deſign was not confined to Iſrael after the fleſh. *He ſhall ſpeak peace to the heathen* alſo. His kingdom comprizes,

* John xiv. 14. † John xvii. 24. ‡ Iſai. xii. 2.

beſides

besides the believing posterity of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, a great multitude gathered from amidst all nations, people, and languages, *from the East and the West, from the North and the South* *. Though the heathen were universally alienated from God, by evil works and an evil conscience, he has undertaken to reconcile them, and to bring those near who were once afar off. By their knowledge of him, their prisons shall be opened, their chains broken †, their condemnation reversed, and they shall be renewed, and accepted in the Beloved, as the true children of Abraham. He shall likewise conciliate peace between Jew and Gentile, make, of both, one people ‡, pulling down the walls of separation and prejudice, that, with one heart and mind they may love, serve, and praise him. For where faith in him obtains, all distinctions are lost and superseded. *There is* then *neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free, but Christ is all, and in all* ||.

Much has been already done by the gospel. Multitudes have been turned from darkness

* Luke xiii. 28, 29. † Isai. xlv. 14. ‡ Eph. ii. 13—16. || Col. iii. 11.

to light, and from the worſhip of dumb idols to ſerve the living and true God. And we expect a time when this promiſe will be more extenſively and literally fulfilled. When the kingdom ſhall be the Lord's to the end of the earth; when the fulneſs of the Gentiles ſhall come in, all Iſrael be ſaved, and the nations ſhall learn war no more.

From theſe characters of the Saviour, we may collect the characters of his people. For they beholding his glory, are changed (according to the meaſure of their faith) into the ſame image. The incommunicable perfections of God, ſuch as his ſovereignty and all-ſufficiency, can only produce in his people correſpondent impreſſions of reverence, ſubmiſſion and dependance; an attempt to be like him in theſe reſpects would be highly impious, and was, indeed, the original ſource of our apoſtaſy from him. Man, by indulging a deſire of being like God, rebelled againſt him, aſpired at independance, and preferred the gratification of his own will, to the righteous and equitable commands of his Maker. The unavoidable conſequence of this madneſs, is miſery. It is not poſſible that he ſhould be happy, till he be reduced to his proper ſtate

of

of ſubordination. But that light of the glory of God in the perſon of Jeſus Chriſt, which is revealed to the renewed heart by the goſpel, has a transforming effect upon thoſe who receive it; they are made partakers of a divine nature, and reſemble him, whoſe they are, and whom they ſerve, *in righteouſneſs, goodneſs, and truth* *.

They are righteous as he is righteous. I ſpeak not of their relative ſtate, as they are accepted and accounted righteous in the Beloved, but of their real character. They learn of him to *love righteouſneſs and hate iniquity* †. Their principles are right, drawn from the revealed truths of God. They comport themſelves as becomes weak and unworthy ſinners, and aſcribe the glory of their ſalvation to the Lord alone; and therefore the general tenor of their conduct, is governed by the righteous rules of his precepts; of which they have the moſt endearing and animating exemplification in the conduct of their Saviour; from him they learn to frame their tempers, deſires, and hopes, and thus give evidence that they are, in deed and in truth, a ſaved people. His love, in proportion as it is realized in

* Eph. v. 9. † Pſal. xlv. 7.

their hearts by faith, teaches them likewiſe to love one another, and to exerciſe benevolence to all men. When they underſtand the true nature of his ſpiritual kingdom, which conſiſteth not in external diſtinctions and forms, *but in righteouſneſs, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghoſt* *; and that it is his great deſign to form to himſelf a people from amongſt the nations of the earth, who ſhall be one body, enlivened by one and the ſame ſpirit, they acquire a large and comprehenſive mind. They riſe above the influence of names, parties, and diviſions; are freed from the narrow views and intereſts of ſelf, *and put on, as the elect of God, bowels of mercies, kindneſs, humility, meekneſs, long-ſuffering, forbearance and forgiveneſs* †, in conformity to the pattern and will of their great Exemplar. Thus he ſpeaks peace to them, and huſhes all their angry, tumultuous paſſions into a calm.

Such is the ſpirit and tendency of the goſpel. Let us try ourſelves by this touch-ſtone, meaſure ourſelves by this rule, and weigh ourſelves in theſe balances of the ſanctuary. They that are Chriſt's have crucified the fleſh, have put off the old man, and are renewed in the

* Rom. xiv. 17. † Col. iii. 12.

ſpirit

ſpirit of their minds. If he be, indeed, your king, your conſciences will bear you witneſs that you revere, imitate, and obey him. If he be your Saviour, you certainly muſt be ſenſible yourſelf, and others muſt obſerve, that you are different from what you once were.

And if any of you ſhould be convinced, that, hitherto, you have been a Chriſtian only in name and in form, but deſtitute of that which conſtitutes the life and power of real godlineſs, this will be a good beginning. For though it be high time that you ſhould in good earneſt attend to theſe things, bleſſed be God it is not yet too late. He is a righteous and a gracious Saviour; ſeek him as ſuch, and he will ſpeak peace to you alſo. His ſure promiſe is recorded for your encouragement, *Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wiſe caſt out* *.

* John vi. 37.

SERMON XII.

EFFECTS OF MESSIAH'S APPEARANCE.

ISAIAH XXXV. 5, 6.

Then the eyes of the blind ſhall be opened, and the ears of the deaf ſhall be unſtopped: Then ſhall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb ſing.

HOW beautiful and magnificent is the imagery, by which the prophet, in this chapter, repreſents the effects of MESSIAH'S appearance! The ſcene, propoſed to our view, is a barren and deſolate wilderneſs. But when he, who in the beginning ſaid, *Let there be light, and there was light*, condeſcends to viſit this wilderneſs, the face of nature is ſuddenly changed by his preſence. Fountains and ſtreams of water burſt forth in the burning deſert, the ſoil becomes fruitful,

ful, clothed with verdure, and adorned with flowers. The towering cedars, which were the glory of Lebanon, and the richeſt paſtures, which were the excellency of Carmel, preſent themſelves to the eye, where, a little before, all was uncomfortable and dreary. How is it, that ſo few of thoſe who value themſelves upon their taſte, and who profeſs to be admirers of paſtoral poetry in particular, are ſtruck with the elegance and beauty of this deſcription? Alas, we can only aſcribe their indifference to the depravity of the human heart. They would, ſurely, have admired this picture, could they have met with it in any of their favourite authors; but deſcriptive paintings in this ſtyle, ſo exquiſitely combining grandeur with ſimplicity, are only to be found in the Bible, a book, which their unhappy prejudices and paſſions, too often lead them to depreciate and neglect. But they who have a ſcriptural and ſpiritual taſte, not only admire this paſſage as a deſcription of a pleaſing change in outward nature, but conſider it as a juſt and expreſſive repreſentation of a more important, a moral change, of which, they have themſelves been, in a meaſure, the happy ſubjects. The barren

ren wildernefs reminds them of the ftate of mankind by the fall, and of their own hearts, before MESSIAH, the Sun of Righteoufnefs arofe upon them with healing, with light, power, and comfort, in his beams. In that memorable hour, old things paffed away, and all things became new. The Lord, by fhining into their hearts, and fhewing them his glory in the perfon of Chrift, has created for them a new heaven and a new earth. The works of God around them in his creation and providence affume a different appearance. Before, they lived without him in the world; but now, they fee his hand wherever they look, they hear his voice in every event, for now the principles of his grace are planted in their fouls, and they are no longer barren nor unfruitful, but are *filled with the fruits of righteoufnefs, which are by Jefus Chrift to his praife* *.

The verfes, which I have read, exhibit the effects of MESSIAH's power and goodnefs, by another image equally pleafing. Not only the wildernefs, but the inhabitants of the wildernefs partake of the virtue of the great Redeemer. He finds them in circumftances

* Phil. i. 11.

of

of diſtreſs, which he only can relieve. But when he comes, the blind receive their ſight, the deaf hear, the lame walk, and the dumb have voices given them to reſound his praiſe. Theſe mighty works, in their literal ſenſe, marked his character, and confirmed his claims, when he was upon earth; and to theſe, he himſelf appealed, in proof of his being the promiſed Saviour whom the prophets had foretold, and that no other was to be expected *.

But the words have a ſtill more ſublime and important ſenſe. As the great Phyſician, he cured all manner of bodily diſeaſes and infirmities. But this was not the principal deſign for which he came into the world. The maladies to which ſin has ſubjected the body, are but emblems of the more dreadful evils which it has brought upon the ſoul. He came to open the eyes of the mind; to make the obſtinate will attentive and obedient to the voice of God; to invigorate our benumbed and paralytic faculties; that we may be active and cheerful in his ſervice; and to open our lips, that our mouths may ſhew forth his praiſe. I have a good hope that I may warrantably ſay, *This day is this ſcripture fulfilled*

* Matt. xi. 3—6.

in

in your ears *. Some of you who were once darkneſs, are now light in the Lord.

Theſe different effects are produced by one ſimple, but powerful, operation. While Lazarus lay in the grave, all his natural powers were inactive. But when the voice of the Son of God reſtored him to life †, he was, of courſe, immediately enabled to ſee, to hear, to move, and to ſpeak. Thus, while we were ſpiritually dead, we were neceſſarily blind, deaf, dumb, and motionleſs, with reſpect to all the objects and faculties of that life of God in the ſoul, which is the perfection and honour of our nature. When we are made partakers of this life, by a new and heavenly birth, then our ſpiritual ſenſes are brought into exerciſe. Then the eyes of the blind are opened, to ſee the beauty and glory of divine truths; we hear the voice of God, we feel a liberty to walk and act in his ſervice, and our tongues are taught to praiſe him. Here are four chief effects of a work of grace upon the heart, which diſtinguiſh believers from the reſt of mankind.

And theſe effects are all to be aſcribed to MESSIAH. For they are all wrought by the

* Luke iv. 21. † John xi. 43.

agency of his Holy Spirit. The gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit which are abſolutely neceſſary, as well for the perpetuating of his goſpel from age to age, as for making it efficacious and ſucceſsful, are beſtowed upon ſinners wholly upon the account of his mediation. It was, when *he aſcended on high and led captivity captive**, that he procured theſe bleſſings for *rebellious men, that the Lord God might dwell among them.* And it was only for his ſake, and on the account of what he was to accompliſh in the fulneſs of time, as intimated in the promiſe of the ſeed of the woman appointed to break the ſerpent's head, that there were any gracious communications afforded to fallen man, from the firſt entrance of ſin into the world. But now the Redeemer's great work is fulfilled, his ſalvation is more openly revealed and applied, by the publication of the goſpel, with the Holy Ghoſt ſent down from heaven, and ſinners hear the voice of God and live. Then all the changes, prefigured and predicted in my text, take place, and the wilderneſs becomes a fruitful field.

1. They were once blind, but now they *ſee.* The religion of true believers is not the

* Pſal. lxviii. 18.

effect

effect of imagination and blind impulse, but is derived from a solid knowledge which will bear the strictest scrutiny, and is the reasonable service of an enlightened understanding. They see God; their apprehensions of him, are, in some measure, answerable to his greatness and his goodness, and inspire them with reverence and love. Their conceptions of other things in which they are most nearly interested, are agreeable to the truth. Sin appears to them hateful in itself, as well as mischievous in its consequences; and holiness, not only necessary by the ordination of God, but desirable for its own sake, as essentially belonging to the true dignity and happiness of man. They know themselves; they see and feel that they are such creatures as the Bible describes them to be, weak, depraved, and vile. Of course, they see the folly of attempting to recommend themselves to God, and can no longer place any dependance on what they once accounted their wisdom, power, or righteousness; and therefore they see the absolute necessity of a Saviour. They see, likewise, and approve the method of salvation proposed by the gospel, as worthy of the wisdom and justice of God, and every way adapted

adapted to the exigencies of their ſins, wants, and fears. They ſee and admire the excellence, dignity, and ſufficiency of him, on whom their help is laid. His power and authority engage their confidence, his love captivates and fixes their hearts. They ſee the vanity of the preſent ſtate, and the vaſt importance of eternity. In theſe reſpects they have all of them a good underſtanding, however inferior in natural capacity, or acquired knowledge, to the wiſe men of the world.

2. Their knowledge, ſo far as they have attained, is not merely ſpeculative, cold, and indiſtinct, like the light of the moon. The Sun of Righteouſneſs has ſhined into their hearts. The light they enjoy is vital, cheering and effective. Becauſe they thus ſee, they *hear* likewiſe. They were once deaf to the voice of God, whether he ſpoke by his word or his providence; whether in the language of mercy or judgment. But now their deaf ears are unſtopped. They are now attentive, ſubmiſſive, and willing to receive his inſtructions, and to obey his commands. With them, one *Thus ſaith the Lord*, has the force of a thouſand arguments. They deſire no farther proof of a doctrine, no other warrant

for their practice, no other reason for any dispensation, than Thus the Lord has said, This he requires, and This is his appointment. Thus their wills are brought into subjection; and they so understand, as to believe and obey.

3. Farther, with their sight and hearing, they receive power and activity. Once, they were tied and bound in the chain of their sins, or like a man benumbed with a dead-palsy, unable to move. If they sometimes seemed to express desires, that might be called *good* with respect to their object, they were faint and ineffectual. But now their fetters are broken, the health and strength of their souls is restored, and God has wrought in them not only to *will*, but also to *do according to his good pleasure* *. It is not more wonderful that a cripple should suddenly recover the use of his limbs, than that a person, who has long been fettered in sinful habits, should be enabled to move and act with alacrity in the service of God. But in the day of divine power, sinners are made both willing and able. How burdensome was that which they once accounted their religion! how little comfort did it yield them! how little did it assist them

* Phil. ii. 13.

againſt their paſſions, or againſt their fears? But all things are become new, ſince they have attained to a life of faith in the Son of God. Their religious ſervice is now pleaſant, and their warfare, againſt ſin and the world, victorious. Their obligations, motives, reſources, encouragements, and proſpects, inſpire them with a holy vigour, to run, with patience and perſeverance, the race that is ſet before them.

4. Having their ſight and hearing thus reſtored, and their hearts enlarged to walk at liberty in the ways of wiſdom; they are no longer dumb, ſilent, and ſullen, but, out of the abundance of their hearts, their mouths ſpeak the language of gratitude, praiſe, and joy. For though moſt people have the faculty of ſpeech, and can uſe, or rather abuſe, their tongues fluently; though we are ſufficiently expert from our childhood, in the dialects of falſhood, profaneneſs and folly; yet, by nature, we are dumb with reſpect to the language that becomes us, as the creatures of God, and as thoſe who have ſinned againſt him, and yet are invited to ſeek his mercy. But when grace teaches the heart, then the

heart teaches the mouth *. When we believe, then we ſpeak, yea, we ſing and greatly rejoice; as it is written, *In that day I will praiſe thee; though thou waſt angry, thine anger is turned away* †. And again, *The voice of joy and thankſgiving is in the tabernacles of the righteous* ‡. *Let the redeemed of the Lord ſay, That he is good, and his mercy endureth for ever* §.

It is of great importance to examine ourſelves by this teſt, and not to be ſatisfied with our knowledge of the goſpel, any farther than our conſciences bear us witneſs, that it has produced a real, moral, change in our tempers, conduct, and purſuits. For there is a knowledge which is falſely ſo called. It puffeth up, but edifieth not. Our Lord's declaration deſerves our moſt ſerious attention. *For judgment I am come into this world; that they which ſee not may ſee; and that they which ſee might be made blind* ‖. It is very poſſible, yea, very eaſy, by the help of books, ſermons, and converſe, to acquire an orderly and ſyſtematic knowledge of divine truths; it may be learnt thus, like any other branch of human ſcience, and the head be well ſtored

* Prov. xvi. 23. † Iſai. xii. 1. ‡ Pſal. cxviii. 15. § Pſal. cvii. 1, 2. ‖ John ix. 39.

with orthodox ſentiments; and there may be an ability to prove and defend them, in a way of argumentation, while the heart is utterly a ſtranger to their ſalutary influence. Such characters are too common. None make a greater parade and boaſt of ſeeing, than theſe perſons. None are more fatally blinded. They ſmile, with diſdain, when they ſpeak of a ſelf-righteouſneſs founded upon prayers, alms-deeds, and ſacraments; but are not aware that they themſelves live in the very ſpirit of the Phariſees *, ſo clearly deſcribed, and ſo expreſsly condemned, in the New Teſtament. Their ſuppoſed knowledge of the doctrines which they miſunderſtand and abuſe, is the righteouſneſs on which they build their hopes; and truſting to this, they deſpiſe all thoſe who are ſtricter in practice than themſelves, as ignorant and legal; and diſcover, almoſt as great diſlike to cloſe and faithful preaching, as they could do to poiſon. Though the doctrines of the goſpel, when rightly received, are productive of godlineſs, it is to be feared, there are people who eſpouſe and plead for them, to quiet their conſciences, by furniſhing them with excuſes for the ſins they are unwilling

* Luke xviii. 2.

to

to forſake. It is not ſurprizing, that they who are diſpleaſed with the yoke of our Lord's precepts, ſhould ſeem friendly to the idea of ſalvation without the works of the law. The notion of the final perſeverance of believers, may afford a pillow for thoſe to reſt on, who being at preſent deſtitute of all feeling of ſpiritual life, labour to perſuade themſelves that they are Chriſtians, becauſe they had ſome ſerious thoughts, and made ſome profeſſion of the truth, many years ago. So, likewiſe, in what the ſcriptures teach, of the total inability of fallen man, they think they have a plea to juſtify their negligence and ſloth, and therefore are not diſpoſed to contradict the teſtimony. The invitation and command to wait, and watch, and ſtrive, in the ways and means of the Lord's appointment, they evade, as they think, with impunity, by confeſſing the charge, and ſaying, I am a poor creature indeed, I can do nothing of myſelf aright, and therefore to what purpoſe ſhould I attempt to do any thing? A miniſter may preach upon theſe points, in general terms, and obtain their good word. But if he ſpeaks plainly and faithfully to conſcience; if he bears teſtimony not only

against dead works, but against a dead faith; against spiritual pride, evil tempers, evil speaking, love of the world, and sinful compliances; if he insists that the branches of the true vine should bear grapes, and not the same fruit as the bramble; hearers of this stamp will think they do God service, by censuring all he can say, as low and legal trash. How awful! that people should be blinded by the very truths which they profess to believe! Yet I fear such cases are too frequent. God grant a delusion of this kind may never be found amongst us! *For if the salt* itself *should lose its savor, wherewith shall it be salted**? May we come simply to the light, with a desire of seeing more of ourselves, and more of our Saviour; that we may be more humble and spiritual, more afraid of sin, more watchful and successful in striving against it; and, in our whole conversation, more conformable to our glorious Head!

But to return. From what has been offered upon this subject, we may observe,

1. That true Christianity is friendly to society, and to the common interests of mankind. It is the source of peace, tenderness, benevolence, and every humane temper. It is

* Matt. v. 13.

is calculated to ſooth the fierce diſpoſition, to enlarge the ſelfiſh ſpirit, and to transform the lion into the lamb. What then muſt we think of thoſe pretended friends to liberty and free enquiry, whoſe unhappy zeal, is employed, to rob us of the only light and balm of life? Who, by their miſrepreſentations and cavils, endeavour to perſuade others, though they cannot effectually perſuade themſelves, that the goſpel, a ſcheme ſo wiſe in its conſtitution, ſo ſalutary in its deſign, ſo powerful in its effects, is no better than an impoſition, the contrivance of ſuperſtitious or artful men! Why ſhould they attempt to take away, the foundation of our hope, and the ſpring of our comfort (if they were able) when they know they have nothing to ſubſtitute, in their place! Let us think of them with that compaſſion which their ſtate calls for; and pray for them, *if peradventure God will give them repentance to the acknowledgement of the truth* *.

2. The change thus wrought is great, marvellous, and, if not ſo frequent, might be ſtyled miraculous. It is more than education, example, perſuaſion, or reſolution can perform.

* 2 Tim. ii. 25.

It is the work of God alone to open the blind eyes, to change the heart of ſtone into fleſh, and to raiſe the dead.

This thought ſhould exclude boaſting. The happy ſubjects of this change, were no better by nature or practice, than others. They have nothing but what they have received. The glory and praiſe is due to the Lord alone. It ſhould likewiſe ſoften their cenſure of thoſe who are ſtill in a ſtate of alienation from God, or, at leaſt, prevent the emotions of anger and reſentment towards them. They know not what they do. Their danger ſhould excite our pity, and our friendly endeavours to recover them from the error of their way. And, eſpecially, we ſhould be careful ſo to regulate our behaviour, *that if they obey not the word, they may without the word be convinced* and *won* *, by the force of our example. If the Lord be pleaſed to do that for them, which he has done for us, their diſlike of us, and their oppoſition to us, will be quickly at an end; and though they ſet out after us, they may poſſibly make a ſwifter progreſs in the Chriſtian life, than we have done. Thus, though Saul of Tarſus ap-

* 1 Pet. iii. 1.

proached

proached Damaſcus, as an enemy and a perſecutor, when the ſcales fell from his eyes, he not only immediately joined the diſciples, but in a little time became a pattern to them.

That the change is the work of God, ſhould likewiſe be conſidered by thoſe, who, from a ſenſe of the greatneſs of their ſins, and the ſtrength of their ſinful habits, are ready to ſink into deſpair. Whatever apparent difficulty there may be in your caſe, it is eaſy to divine power. *All things are poſſible with God* *, and *all things*, likewiſe, *are poſſible to him that believeth* †. The promiſes invite you to apply to him who is the Author and finiſher of faith, and who has ſaid for your encouragement, *Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wiſe caſt out*.

* Mark x. 27. † Mark ix. 23.

SER-

SERMON XIII.

THE GREAT SHEPHERD.

ISAIAH xl. 11.

He ſhall feed his flock like a ſhepherd; he ſhall gather the lambs in his arm, and carry them in his boſom; and ſhall gently lead thoſe that are with young.

IT is not eaſy for thoſe, whoſe habits of life are inſenſibly formed by the cuſtoms of modern times, to conceive any adequate idea of the paſtoral life, as it obtained in the eaſtern countries, before that ſimplicity of manners, which characterized the early ages, was corrupted, by the artificial and falſe refinements of luxury. Wealth, in thoſe days, conſiſted principally in flocks and herds; and Abraham, Iſaac, Jacob, and others, who were, to ſpeak in modern language, perſons of high diſtinction, were likewiſe ſhepherds. The book

book of Genefis, which is an authentic and infallible hiftory of the moft antient times, exhibits a manner of living, fo different from our own, that, perhaps, few perfons are qualified to enter fully into the fpirit of the defcription. The poets feem to have derived their idea of the golden age, from fome imperfect tradition of this primitive ftate; and if we compare it with the ftate of things around us, methinks we have reafon to fay, *How is the gold become dim, and the fine gold changed* *! The opulence of Jacob may be conjectured from the prefent he fent to his brother Efau †. Yet Jacob attended his flocks himfelf, *in the drought by day, and in the froft by night* ‡. The vigilance, the providence, the tendernefs, neceffary to the due difcharge of the fhepherd's office, have been frequently applied, in defcribing the nature and ends of government; and it has been efteemed a high encomium of a good king, to ftyle him, the fhepherd of his people. This character MESSIAH, the Saviour, condefcends to bear; and happy are they, who, with a pleafing confcioufnefs, can fay, *We are his people, and the fheep of his pafture* §.

* Lam.iv.1. † Gen.xxxii.14,15. ‡ Gen.xxxi.40. § Pfal. c. 3.

The

The paſſage will lead me to ſpeak of the ſhepherd, the flock, and his care and tenderneſs over them.

I. Our Lord expreſsly ſtyles himſelf the *Shepherd*, the *good Shepherd of the ſheep* *, and the apoſtle Peter ſtyles him the *chief Shepherd* †. His faithful miniſters have the honour to be under ſhepherds; he appoints, and qualifies them, to feed his flock. They are the meſſengers of his will, but they can do nothing without him; they can only communicate what they receive, and cannot watch over the flock, unleſs they are themſelves watched over by him ‡. For, with reſpect to efficacy, he is the chief, and, indeed, the ſole Shepherd. The eyes of all are upon him, and *his* eye is upon, and over, all his flock. The Old Teſtament church had a ſhepherd, and their ſhepherd was Jehovah §. Unleſs, therefore, the Shepherd and Biſhop of our ſouls, likewiſe, be Jehovah, we fall unſpeakably ſhort of the privilege of ancient Iſrael, if their Shepherd was almighty, and if ours could be but a creature. Surely we could not then ſay, what yet the apoſtle affirms, that we have a *better covenant*,

* John x. 11, 14. † 1 Pet. v. 4. ‡ Pſal. cxxvii. 1. § Pſal. xxiii. 1.

established upon better promises *; since MESSIAH, himself, is expressly declared, to be the surety and the mediator of this covenant. But would it not be better, upon this supposition, with David, who could say, Jehovah is my Shepherd, than with us, who are intrusted to the care of a delegated and inferior keeper, if Jesus be not Jehovah. Besides, who but Jehovah can relieve the necessities of multitudes in all places, in the same moment, and be equally near and attentive to them, in every age? The sinner, who is enlightened to know himself, his wants, enemies, and dangers, will not dare to confide in any thing short of an almighty arm; he needs a shepherd, who is full of wisdom, full of care, full of power; able, like the sun, to shine upon millions at once, and possessed of those incommunicable attributes of Deity, omniscience, and omnipresence. Such is our great Shepherd; and he is eminently the good Shepherd also, for he laid down his life for the sheep, and has redeemed them to God by his own blood.

II. A *shepherd* is a relative name; it has reference to a *flock*. This great and good Shepherd has a flock, whom he loved from

* Heb. viii. 6.

ever-

everlafting, and whom having loved, he will love to the end *.

Formofi pecoris cuftos, formofior ipfe!

He humbled himfelf for their fakes, fubmitted to partake of their nature and their forrows, took upon him the form of a fervant, and was made in the likenefs of finful flefh. He died for his fheep, *the juft for the unjuft* †, to redeem them from the curfe of the law, from the guilt and dominion of fin, from the power of fatan, and to bring them to God. They, by nature, are all *gone aftray, every one to his own way* ‡; but having thus bought them with his blood, in his own appointed time, he feeks, finds, and reftores his fheep. By the power of his word and Spirit, he makes himfelf known to their hearts, caufes them to hear and underftand his voice, and guides them into his fold. Then, they became his fheep in the fenfe of my text. They are under his immediate protection and government.

Confidered as individuals, they are fitly defcribed by the name of *fheep*. A fheep is a

* John xiii. 1. † 1 Pet. iii. 18. ‡ Ifai. liii. 6.

weak,

weak, defencelefs, improvident creature; prone to wander, and if once aftray, is feldom known to return of its own accord. A fheep has neither ftrength to fight with the wolf, nor fpeed to efcape from him; nor has it the fore-fight of the ant, to provide its own fuftenance. Such is our character, and our fituation. Unable to take care of ourfelves, prone to wander from our refting-place, expofed to enemies which we can neither withftand nor avoid, without refource in ourfelves, and taught, by daily experience, the infufficiency of every thing around us. Yet, if this Shepherd be our Shepherd, weak and helplefs as we are, we may be of good courage. If we can fay with David, *The Lord is my Shepherd,* we may make the fame inferences which he did, *Therefore I fhall not want: therefore I need not fear.*

Collectively they are a *flock.* They are not, indeed, in one place. They are fcattered abroad, difperfed through different ages and countries, feparated by feas and mountains, and, too often, by mifapprehenfions and prejudices, by names and forms; and, only a very fmall part of the flock are known to each other. But they are all equally known to

him,

him, and equally under his eye: In his view they are one flock, one body; they are animated by one and the ſame ſpirit; their views, hopes, and aims, are the ſame; and, yet a little while, they ſhall be all brought together, a number without number, to rejoice and to join in worſhip, before his throne of glory. For they have an inheritance reſerved for them in heaven *, and they ſhall be ſafely kept, while they are ſojourners upon earth, for the Shepherd of Iſrael is their keeper.

III. *He ſhall feed his flock like a ſhepherd.* The word is not reſtrained to feeding. It includes all the branches of the ſhepherd's office. He ſhall act the part of a Shepherd to his flock. We have a beautiful miniature deſcription, of what he has engaged to do, and what he actually does, for his people, as their Shepherd, in the twenty-third Pſalm. And the ſubject, is more largely illuſtrated, in the thirty-fourth chapter of Ezekiel's prophecy. His ſheep, from age to age, have been witneſſes to the truth of his promiſes. He has a flock at preſent who rejoice in his care, and greater multitudes, as yet unborn, ſhall ſucceſſively ariſe in their appointed ſeaſons, *and*

* 1 Pet. i. 4, 5.

call him blessed *. For he is the *same yesterday, to day, and for ever.*

He feeds them. He leads them into green and pleasant pastures. These pastures are, his word and ordinances, by which, he communicates to them of his own fulness, for in strict propriety of speech, he himself is their food. They eat his flesh and drink his blood †. This was once thought a hard saying ‡ by some of his professed followers, and is still thought so by too many. But, it is his own saying, and, therefore, I am not concerned, either to confirm, or to vindicate it. The knowledge they receive by faith, of his incarnation and sufferings unto death, of the names he bears, and of the offices and relations in which he is pleased to act for them, is the life and food of their souls. The expression of feeding them, is agreeable to the analogy, he has been pleased to establish, between the natural and the spiritual life. As the strength of the body is maintained and renewed, by eating and drinking; so they, who, in this sense, feed upon him in their hearts by faith with thanksgiving, even *they* live §

* Psal. lxxii. 17. † John vi. 54. ‡ John vi. 58. § John vi. 57.

by him; *for his flesh is meat indeed, and his blood is drink indeed.*

He guides them. First by his example. He has trodden the path of duty and trial before them; and they perceive and follow his foot-steps. Again, by his word and Spirit he teaches them the way in which they should go; and both inclines and enables them to walk in it *. He guides them, likewise, by his providence; he appoints the bounds of their habitations, the line and calling in which they are to serve him, and orders and adjusts the circumstances of their lives, according to his infinite wisdom, so as, finally, to accomplish his gracious designs in their favour.

He guards them. It is written concerning him, *He shall stand and feed in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God* †. If we conceive of a flock of sheep feeding in the midst of wolves, who are restrained from breaking in upon them, not by any visible enclosure, but meerly by the power of the shepherd's eye, which keeps them in awe and at a distance, it will give us some idea of the situation of his people. He pro-

* Isai. xxx. 21. † Micah v. 4.

vides them food in the midst of many and mighty * enemies, who envy them their privilege, but cannot prevent it. If he should withdraw his attention from the flock, for a single minute, they would be worried. But he has promised to keep them night and day †, and every moment; therefore their enemies plot and rage in vain. Their *visible* foes are numerous; but if we could look into the *invisible world*, and take a view of the subtilty, malice, machinations, and assiduity of the powers of darkness, who are incessantly watching for opportunities of annoying them; we should have a most striking conviction, that a flock, so defenceless and feeble in themselves, and against which such a combination is formed, can only be kept by the power of God.

He heals them. A good shepherd will examine the state of his flock. But there is no attention worthy of being compared with his. Not the slightest circumstance in their concerns, escapes his notice. When they are ready to faint, borne down with heavy exercises of mind, wearied with temptations, dry and disconsolate in their spirits, he seasonably

* Psal. xxiii. 5. † Isai. xxvii. 3.

revives

revives them. Nor are they in heavineſs without a need-be for it. All his diſpenſations towards them are medicinal, deſigned to correct, or to reſtrain, or to cure, the maladies of their ſouls. And they are adjuſted, by his wiſdom and tenderneſs, to what they can bear, and to what their caſe requires. It is he, likewiſe, who heals their bodily ſickneſs, and gives them help in all their temporal trouble. He is repreſented to us, as counting their ſighs *, putting their tears into his bottle, recording their ſorrows in his book of remembrance; and even, as being himſelf *touched with a feeling of their infirmities* †, as the head feels for the members of the body.

He reſtores them. The power and ſubtilty of their enemies, are employed to force, or entice them from his rule; and too often prevail for a ſeaſon. The ſheep turn aſide into forbidden paths; and whenever they do, they would wander, farther and farther, till they were quite loſt again, if he were not their Shepherd. If he permits them to deviate, he has a time, to convince them, *that it was an evil and a bitter thing to forſake the Lord their Shepherd* ‡, and to humble them, and to bring

* Pſal. lvi. 8. † Heb. iv. 15. ‡ Jer. ii. 19.

them back. Thus they become more ſenſible of their own weakneſs, and of their obligations to his gracious care; for he will not ſuffer their enemies to triumph over them. He will not loſe one of his true flock; not one convinced ſinner, who has, indeed, and in truth, ſurrendered and entruſted his all to him. They muſt, and they ſhall, ſmart and mourn for their folly; but he will, in due ſeaſon, break their ſnares, and lead them again into the paths of peace, for his own name's ſake.

The flock are not all *ſheep*. There are among them *lambs*. Theſe are eſpecially mentioned, and for theſe he expreſſes a peculiar tenderneſs. *He will gather them in his arm, and carry them in his boſom.* Though they are weaklings, they ſhall not be left behind. This is a beautiful and pathetic image. If a poor lamb is weary, and unable to keep up with the flock, it ſhall be carried. This clauſe affords encouragement,

1. *To young people.* Early ſerious impreſſions are often made upon the hearts of children, which we are to cheriſh, by directing their thoughts to the compaſſion of the good Shepherd, who has ſaid, *Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of ſuch*

is

is the kingdom of God *. This high and holy one, who humbles himſelf to notice the worſhip of the heavenly hoſt, hears the prayers of worms upon the earth; and his ear is open to the prayers of a child, no leſs ſo, than to the prayer of a king.

2. *To young converts.* Theſe, at whatever age, are children in the Lord's family, lambs in his flock. They are, as yet, weak, unſettled, and unexperienced. Almoſt every day brings them into a new and untried ſituation. They often meet with oppoſition and diſcouragement, where they have promiſed themſelves help and countenance. Perhaps their neareſt friends are diſpleaſed with them. They are liable, likewiſe, while they are enquiring the way to Zion, to be perplexed by the various opinions, and angry contentions, prevailing among the different religious perſons, or parties, to whom they may addreſs themſelves. They are frequently diſcouraged by the falls and miſcarriages of profeſſors, ſome of whom, it is poſſible, they may have admired, and looked up to, as patterns for their own imitation. Add to theſe things, what they ſuffer from new and unexpected

* Mark x. 14.

discoveries of the evil and deceitfulness of their hearts; the mistakes they commit, in judgment and practice, for want of a more solid and extensive knowledge of the scriptures; and the advantage the great enemy of their souls derives from these their various difficulties to assault their peace, and obstruct their progress. What would become of them in such circumstances, if their faithful Shepherd had not promised to lead, and uphold them, with the arm of his power?

There is, likewise, particular mention made of *those who are with young*. These he will gently lead. If we take the word according to our version, it may signify a state of conviction, or trouble. *Many are the afflictions of the righteous* *, by which they are often wearied and heavy laden. But when their spirits are overwhelmed within them, he knoweth their path. Jacob would not permit his cattle, that were with young, to be † over-driven for one day, lest they should die. Much less will this good Shepherd suffer the burdened, among his flock, to be hurried and tempted, beyond what they are able, or what he will enable, them to bear.

* Psal. xxxiv. 19. † Gen. xxxiii. 13.

But

But the word ſignifies, Thoſe that *have young*, rather than thoſe that *are with young*. Two ſorts of perſons in the Lord's flock, who come under this deſcription, feel an eſpecial need of his compaſſion, tenderneſs, and patience.

1. He only knows the feelings of the hearts of *parents*. What ſolicitude and anxiety they have for their young ones, the ſucklings, if I may ſo ſpeak, of the flock, which mingle with all their endeavours, to manage rightly the important charge committed to them, and to bring their *children up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord*.

2. *Miniſters*, likewiſe, have painful exerciſes of mind. The apoſtle Paul ſpeaks of *travelling in birth again, till Chriſt be formed in our hearers* *. When we know of any newly awakened, and beginning to ſeek his ſalvation, how ſolicitous is our care to bring them forward, to comfort them, to warn them againſt the devices of their hearts, and of their enemies! And how piercing our grief and diſappointment, if they miſcarry! How much is felt in ſympathy for the trials of the flock! What wiſdom, faithfulneſs, courage, meek-

* Gal. iv. 19.

neſs,

ness, and unction from on high, are necessary to the due discharge of what we owe to the flocks, of which we have the oversight! Who is sufficient for these things! And when we have done our best, our all, what defects and defilements have we to mourn over! But this is our great consolation, that he, who knows us, and leads us, considers *our frame, and remembers that we are but dust.*

In this delineation of the character and conduct of the *Great Shepherd of the sheep* *, we have an affecting exemplar and pattern, for the imitation of those, who act in the honourable office of under shepherds, and are called, by their profession and engagement, to feed his sheep and lambs. Whether there be any ministers in our assembly, or not, you will at least permit me to speak a word to my own heart; which may, I hope, at the same time, impress your minds with a sense of our great need of your prayers. *Brethren, pray for us* †! *and pray to the Lord of the harvest, that he may send forth more faithful labourers into his harvest* ‡. For it is his work alone. It is not absolutely necessary, that a minister of the gospel should be, in the first line, of those who

* Heb. xiii. 20. † 1 Thess. v. 25. ‡ Matt. ix. 38.

are

are admired for their abilities or literature; much leſs that he ſhould be diſtinguiſhed by ſuch titles, honours, and emoluments as this world can give. But it is neceſſary, and of the laſt importance, to his character and uſefulneſs here, and to his acceptance in the great day of the Lord, that he ſhould have a ſhepherd's eye and a ſhepherd's heart. He muſt ſerve the flock, *not for filthy lucre, or by conſtraint* *, (that conſtraint, which the apoſtle attributes to the love of Chriſt, only excepted) *but willingly*, and with a view to their edification. And he muſt, indeed, *ſerve* them, not acting as a *Lord over God's heritage, but as an example to the flock.* Not preaching *himſelf* †, perverting his ſacred office to the purpoſes of ambition, or vain-glory, or the acquiſition of wealth; but preaching Chriſt Jeſus the Lord, and employing all his powers to turn ſinners from the error of their ways. *He who winneth ſouls is wiſe* ‡. If it be wiſdom, to propoſe the nobleſt end, the faithful miniſter is wiſe; the end at which he aims, in ſubordination to the will and glory of God, is the ſalvation of ſouls; and the recovery of one immortal ſoul to the favour and image of God,

* 1 Pet. v. 2, 3. † 2 Cor. iv. 5. ‡ Prov. xi. 30.

God, is, and will at length be found, a greater and more important event, than the deliverance of a whole kingdom from ſlavery or temporal ruin. If it be wiſdom, to purſue a right end by the fitteſt means, he is wiſe; he knows the goſpel of Chriſt to be the power of God, the appointed, the effectual, the only ſufficient mean for accompliſhing his great purpoſe; therefore, however unfaſhionable it may be, he is not aſhamed of it, he preaches it, and he glories in it. If it be an effect of wiſdom, not to be deterred from the proſecution of a great and noble deſign, by the cenſure and diſlike of weak and incompetent judges, the faithful miniſter is truly wiſe. He loves his fellow-creatures, and would willingly pleaſe them for their good, but he cannot fear them, becauſe he fears and ſerves the Lord. He looks forward, with deſire, to the day of that ſolemn and general viſitation, when the *Shepherd and Biſhop of ſouls ſhall himſelf appear* *. And if he may then ſtand among thoſe, who are pardoned and accepted in the Beloved, and receive the *crown of life, which his Lord has promiſed to them that love him* †—this thought fully reconciles him to the

* 1 Pet. ii. 25. v. 4. † 2 Tim. iv. 8.

the trials of his ſituation; and however depreciated, miſrepreſented, oppoſed, or ill-treated here, he can ſay, *None of theſe things move me, neither count I my life dear to myſelf, ſo that I may finiſh my courſe with joy, and the miniſtry which I have received of the Lord Jeſus, to teſtify the goſpel of the grace of God* *.

There is a counter-part to this character, deſcribed, in ſtrong and glowing language, by the prophets. There are idol ſhepherds, who feed not the flock, but themſelves †; who neither attempt to heal the ſick, to ſtrengthen the feeble, to bind up that which is broken, nor to recover that which has been driven away. Shepherds ‡, who cannot underſtand, greedy, lovers of gain—and who, by a change of metaphor, are compared to ſlumbering watchmen, and dumb dogs that cannot bark. The New Teſtament teaches us to expect that ſuch perſons, under the name of miniſters, will be found, likewiſe, in the viſible church of Chriſt. Men of corrupt minds §, deſtitute of the truth, who ſerve not the Lord Jeſus, but their own belly. Men who are of the world ||, and ſpeak of the world; and therefore the

* Acts xx. 24. † Ezek. xxxiv. 2. ‡ Iſai. lvi. 10,11. § 1 Tim. vi. 5. Rom. xvi. 18. || 1 John iv. 5.

world heareth and favoureth them. But alas—neither the wretched slave who toils at the galley-oar, nor he that is doomed to labour in a deep mine, where the light of the sun never reaches him; nor the lunatic who howls in a chain, are such emphatical objects of our compassion, as the unhappy man, who prostitutes the name and function of a minister of Christ, to the gratification of his pride and avarice; and whose object, is not the welfare of the flock, but the possession of the fleece. Who * intrudes into the post of a watchman, but gives no alarm of the impending danger. If the scriptures be true; if the gospel be not, indeed, as Pope Leo the tenth, profanely styled it, a lucrative fable; the more he accumulates riches, the more he rises in dignity, the more his influence extends, the more he is to be commiserated. He may have the reward he seeks. He may be admired and flattered; he may, for a season, be permitted to withstand and discountenance the efforts of the Lord's faithful servants; he may shine in the accomplishments of a Scholar or a Courtier. But nothing less than repentance, and faith in the Redeemer, whose name

* Ezek. xxxiii. 7, 8.

and cauſe he has diſhonoured, can finally ſcreen him from the full effect of that terrible denunciation—*Wo to the idol ſhepherd that forſaketh* [or neglecteth] *the flock: The ſword ſhall be upon his arm, and upon his right eye: His arm ſhall be clean dried up, and his right eye ſhall be utterly darkened* *.

* Zech. xi. 17.

SER-

SERMON XIV.

REST FOR THE WEARY.

MATT. xi. 28.

Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

WHICH shall we admire most; the majesty, or the grace, conspicuous in this invitation? How soon would the greatest earthly monarch be impoverished, and his treasures utterly exhausted, if all, that are poor and miserable, had encouragement to apply freely to him, with a promise of relief, fully answerable to their wants and wishes! But the riches of Christ are unsearchable and inexhaustible. If millions of millions of distressed sinners seek to *him* for relief, he has a sufficiency for them all. His mercy is infinite to pardon all their sins; his grace is in-

finite, to anſwer and exceed their utmoſt deſires; his power is infinite, to help them in all their difficulties. A number, without number, have been thus waiting upon him, from age to age; and not one of them has been ſent away diſappointed and empty. And the ſtreams of his bounty are ſtill flowing, and ſtill full. Thus the ſun, his brighteſt material image, has been the ſource of light to the earth, and to all its inhabitants, from the creation; and will be equally ſo to all ſucceeding generations, till time ſhall be no more. There is, indeed, an appointed hour, when the ſun ſhall ceaſe to ſhine, and the courſe of nature ſhall fail. But the true Sun, the Sun of Righteouſneſs *, has no variableneſs or ſhadow of turning; and they who depend upon him, while in this world, ſhall rejoice in his light for ever. Can we heſitate to accept of theſe words, as affording a full proof of the divine character, the proper Godhead of our Lord and Saviour; ſuppoſing only, that he meant what he ſaid, and that he is able to make his promiſe good? Can a creature, however excellent and glorious, uſe this language? Can a creature diſcharge the debts,

* Mal. iv. 2. James i. 17.

ſooth

ſooth the diſtreſſes, and ſatisfy the deſires of every individual who looks to him? Who but the Lord God * can raiſe up all that are bowed down, and comfort all that mourn?

Again, as is his majeſty, ſo is his mercy. In acts of grace amongſt men, there are always ſome limitations. If a king proclaims a pardon to a rebellious nation, there are ſtill exceptions. Some ringleaders are excluded. Either their crimes were too great to be forgiven, or their obſtinacy, or influence, are ſuppoſed to be too great, to render their ſafety conſiſtent with the ſafety of the ſtate. But the Saviour excludes none, but thoſe who wilfully exclude themſelves. As no caſe is too hard for his power, ſo no perſon, who applies to him, is ſhut out from his compaſſion. *Him that cometh to him*, whatever his former character or conduct may have been, *he will in no wiſe caſt out* †. This glorious exerciſe of ſovereign mercy, is no leſs a divine attribute, than the power, by which he created the heavens and the earth. It is the conſideration of his mercy in pardoning ſin, and in ſaving ſinners, which cauſes that

* Pſal. cxlvi. 8. Iſai. lxi. 2. † John vi. 37.

admiring exclamation of the prophet, *Who is a God like unto thee* *?

This paſſage (including the two following verſes) cloſes the firſt part of the Oratorio. In tracing the ſeries of the ſcriptures thus far, we have conſidered ſeveral ſignal prophecies which foretold his appearance; we have ſeen their accompliſhment in his birth, and have (I hope) joined with the heavenly hoſt, in aſcribing glory to God in the higheſt, for this unſpeakable gift and effect of his love. We have learnt from the prophets, his characters, as the great Reſtorer, and the great Shepherd. The evangeliſt propoſes him to our meditation here, in a gracious and inviting attitude, as opening his high commiſſion, proclaiming his own ſovereign authority and power, and declaring his compaſſionate purpoſe and readineſs, to give refreſhment and reſt to the weary and heavy laden.

The two principal points in the text are, the *Invitation*, and the *Promiſe*.

I. The *Invitation* is expreſſed in very general terms. *Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden.* There is no qualifying or reſtraining clauſe, to diſcourage any perſon

* Micah vii. 18.

who

who is willing to accept it. Whoever hath an ear to hear, let him hear. *Let him that is athirst come, and whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely* *. I cannot doubt, but these words authorize me, to address myself to every person in the assembly. I speak first to you, who are *spending your money for that which satisfieth not* †: who are wearied in seeking happiness where it is not to be found, and *in digging pits, and hewing out cisterns for yourselves, which will hold no water* ‡, and have hitherto been regardless *of the fountain of living waters*, which is always near you. While you are pursuing the wealth, or honours, of this world, or wasting your time and strength, in the indulgence of sensual appetites, and look no higher, are you, indeed, happy and satisfied? Do you find the paths in which you are led, or rather hurried and driven on, to be the *paths of pleasantness and peace* §? With what face can you charge the professors of religion with hypocrisy, if you pretend to satisfaction in these ways? We have trodden them far enough ourselves, to be assured that there are feelings in your heart which contra-

* Rev. xxii. 17. † Isai. lv. 2. ‡ Jer. ii. 13.
§ Prov. iii. 7.

dict your affection. You know that you are not happy, and we know it likewife. Are you quite ftrangers to a fecret wish, that you had never been born? Or that you could change condition with fome of the brute creation? *Are you not heavy laden*, burdened with guilt, and fears, and forebodings; harraffed with croffes, difappointments, and mortifications? Are you not often, at leaft fometimes, like children in the dark, afraid of being alone; unable to fupport the reflections which are forced upon you in a folitary hour, when you have nothing to amufe you? And while you feem fo alert, and upon the wing, after every kind of diffipation within your reach, is not a chief motive that impels you, a defire, if poffible, of hiding yourfelves from yourfelves, and of calling off your attention from thofe thoughts, which, like vultures, are ready to feize you, and prey upon you, the moment they find you unemployed. And how often do your poor expedients fail you, efpecially in a time of trouble, or on a fick bed? What comfort does the world afford you then? What relief do you then derive from the companions of your vain and gay hours? Moft probably, at fuch a feafon, they

ftand

ſtand aloof from you; the houſe of mourning, or the chamber of ſickneſs, are no leſs unpleaſing to them, than to yourſelf. They do not chuſe the pain of being reminded, by a ſight of your diſtreſs, how ſoon the caſe may be their own. Or, if they viſit you, you find them miſerable comforters. But I have to ſpeak to you of one, who is able to comfort you, in all ſeaſons, and under all circumſtances; whoſe favour is better than life. And will you ſtill refuſe to hear his voice? What hard thing does the Lord require of you? Only to come to him, for that peace and reſt, to which you have hitherto been ſtrangers. But though you are invited, I know that of yourſelves you will not come; you *will* not, and, therefore, you cannot. Be aſſured, however, the invitation does not mock you; and if you finally refuſe it, the fault will lie at your own doors. But may I not hope you will refuſe no longer? The preaching of the goſpel is his appointment, and has a great effect, when accompanied with the energy of his Holy Spirit, to make *a willing people in the day of his power.*

There are others, however, to whom this invitation ſpeaks more directly. The con-

vinced ſinner is *heavy laden*, with the guilt of ſin, and *wearied* with ineffectual ſtrivings againſt it. He is weary of the yoke and burden of the law, when he can neither anſwer its commands with cheerful and acceptable obedience, nor ſee any way of eſcaping the penalty which is due to tranſgreſſors. He ſighs earneſtly and anxiouſly for pardon and liberty. If he has an interval of comparative peace and hope, it is more derived from ſome occaſional fervour and livelineſs in the frame of his ſpirit, than from the exerciſe of faith; and, therefore, as that fervour abates, (and it will not always remain at the ſame height) his fears return. If, in ſuch a favoured moment, he feels little ſolicitation, or trouble, from the evil propenſities of his heart, he is willing to hope they are ſubdued, and that they will trouble him no more; but his triumph is ſhort, the next return of temptation revives all his difficulties, and he is again brought into bondage. For nothing but the knowledge of the Saviour, and the ſupplies of his Spirit, can give ſtable peace to the mind, or victory over ſin. A repetition of theſe diſappointments and changes, fixes a heavy burden and diſtreſs upon the mind.

But

But here is help provided exactly ſuitable to the caſe. Comply with this invitation, *Come to him, and he will ſurely give you reſt.*

But what is it *to come to Chriſt?* It is, to believe in him, to apply to him, to make his invitation and promiſe, our ground and warrant for putting our truſt in him. On another occaſion, he ſaid, *He that cometh to me ſhall never hunger, and he that believeth in me ſhell never thirſt* *. The expreſſions are of the ſame import. When he was upon earth, many who came to him, and even followed him for a ſeaſon, received no ſaving benefit from him. Some came to him from motives of malice and ill will, to enſnare or inſult him. Some followed him for loaves and fiſhes. And of others, who were frequently near him, he complained, *Ye will not come unto me, that ye may have life* †. But they who were diſtreſſed, and came to him for relief, were not diſappointed. *To come to him*, therefore, implies a knowledge of his power, and an application for his help. To us he is not viſible, but he is always near us. And as he appointed his diſciples to meet him in Galilee ‡, previous to his aſcenſion, ſo he

* John vi. 35. † John v. 40. ‡ Matt. xxviii. 16.

has

has promiſed to be found of thoſe who ſeek him, and wait for him, in certain means of his own inſtitution. He is ſeated upon a throne of grace; he is to be ſought in his word, and where his people aſſemble in his name, for he has ſaid, *There will I be in the midſt of them* *. They, therefore, who read his word, frequent his ordinances, and pray unto him, with a deſire that they may know him, and *be remembered with the favour which he beareth to his own people* †, anſwer the deſign of my text. They come to him, and he aſſures them, that whoever they are, he will in no wiſe caſt them out. If they thus come to him, they will of courſe *come out from the world and be ſeparate* ‡. If they apply to him for refuge, they will renounce all other refuge and dependance, and truſt in him alone; according to the words of the prophet, *Aſher ſhall not ſave us, we will not ride upon horſes, neither will we ſay any more unto the works of our hands, Ye are our gods, for in thee the fatherleſs* (the helpleſs and comfortleſs) *findeth mercy* §.

* Matt. xviii. 20. † Pſal. cvi. 4. ‡ 2 Cor. vi. 17. § Hoſ. xiv. 3.

II.

II. The promiſe is, *I will give you reſt* *. The word ſignifies both reſt and refreſhment. He gives a relief and ceſſation from former labour and bondage; and ſuperadds a peace, a joy, a comfort, which revives the weary ſpirit, and proves itſelf to be that very ſatisfaction, which the ſoul had been ignorantly, and in vain, ſeeking, amongſt the creatures, and the objects of ſenſe.

This *reſt* includes a freedom from the forebodings and diſtreſſing accuſations of a guilty conſcience; from the long and fruitleſs ſtruggle between the will and the judgment; from the condemning power of the law; from the tyranny of irregular and inconſiſtent appetites; and from the dominion of pride and ſelf, which make us unhappy in ourſelves, and hated and deſpiſed by others. A freedom, likewiſe, from the cares and anxieties, which, in ſuch an uncertain world as this, diſquiet the minds of thoſe who have no ſolid, ſcriptural dependance upon God; and eſpecially a freedom from the dread of death, and of the things which are beyond it. In theſe and other reſpects, the believer in Jeſus enters into a preſent reſt. He is under the guidance

* Compare 1 Cor. xvi. 18. 2 Cor. vii. 13. Philemon 7, 20.

of

of infinite wiſdom, and the protection of almighty power; he is permitted to *caſt all his cares upon the Lord* *, and is aſſured that the Lord *careth for him*. So far as he poſſeſſes by faith the ſpirit and liberty of his high calling, he is in perfect peace. The prophet Jeremiah has given a beautiful deſcription and illuſtration of this reſt of a believer †; which is rendered more ſtriking, by being contraſted with the miſerable ſtate of thoſe who live without God in the world. *Thus ſaith the Lord, Curſed is the man that truſteth in man, and maketh fleſh his arm, and whoſe heart departeth from the Lord. For he ſhall be like the heath in the deſert, and ſhall not ſee when good cometh, but ſhall inhabit the parched places of the wilderneſs, in a ſalt land not inhabited.* But, *Bleſſed is the man that truſteth in the Lord, and whoſe hope the Lord is. For he ſhall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that ſpreadeth out her roots by the river, and ſhall not ſee when heat cometh, but her leaf ſhall be green, and ſhall not be careful in the year of drought, neither ſhall ceaſe from yielding fruit.*

But beſides *reſt*, there is *refreſhment*. There are pleaſures and conſolations, in that inter-

* 1 Pet. v. 7. † Jer. xvii. 5—8.

course

courſe and communion with God, to which, we are invited by the goſpel; which, both in kind and degree, are unſpeakably ſuperior to all that the world can beſtow, and ſuch as the world cannot deprive us of. For they have no neceſſary dependance upon outward ſituation or circumſtances; they are compatible with poverty, ſickneſs, and ſufferings. They are often moſt ſenſibly ſweet and lively, when the ſtreams of creature comfort are at the loweſt ebb. Many have been able to ſay with the apoſtle, *As the ſufferings of Chriſt* (thoſe which we endure for his ſake, or ſubmit to from his hand) *abound in us, ſo our conſolation in Chriſt alſo aboundeth**. The all-ſufficient God, can increaſe theſe communications of comfort from himſelf, to a degree beyond our ordinary conceptions; ſo as not only to ſupport his people, under the moſt exquiſite pains, but even to ſuſpend and overpower all ſenſe of pain, when the torment would otherwiſe be extreme. And he has ſometimes been pleaſed to honour the fidelity of his ſervants, and to manifeſt his own faithfulneſs to them, by ſuch an interpoſition. One well-atteſted inſtance our

* 1 Cor. i. 5.

own

own martyrology affords, that of Mr. Bainham, who ſuffered in the reign of Queen Mary. When he was in the fire, he addreſſed himſelf to his perſecutors, to this effect: "You call for miracles in proof of our doctrine, now behold one; I feel no more pain from theſe flames, than if I was laid upon a bed of roſes." But in ordinary caſes, and in all caſes, they who taſte how good the Lord is to them that ſeek him, how he cheers them with the light of his countenance, and what ſupports he affords them in the hour of need, can, without regret, part with the poor, periſhing pleaſures of ſin, and encounter all the difficulties they meet with in the path of duty. Whatever their profeſſion of his name, and their attachment to his cauſe, may have coſt them, they will acknowledge that it has made them ample amends.

Come therefore unto him, venture upon his gracious word, and you ſhall find reſt for your ſouls! Can the world out-bid this gracious offer? Can the world promiſe to give you reſt, when you are burdened with trouble? When your ciſterns fail, and your gourds wither? Or when you are terrified with the approach of death, when your pulſe

intermits, when you are about to take a final farewel of all you ever ſaw with your eyes, and an awful, unknown, untried, unchangeable eternity is opening upon your view. Such a moment moſt certainly awaits you; and when it arrives, if you die in your ſenſes, and are not judicially given up to hardneſs and blindneſs of heart, you will aſſuredly tremble, if you never trembled before. Oh! be perſuaded; may the Lord himſelf perſuade you to be timely wiſe, to ſeek him now, while he may be found, to call upon him while he is yet near. Leſt that dreadful threatening ſhould be your portion: *Becauſe I have called, and ye refuſed, I have ſtretched out my hand and no man regarded; I alſo will laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your fear cometh* *.

* Prov. i. 24, 26.

SER-

SERMON XV.

MESSIAH'S EASY YOKE.

MATT. xi. 29, 30.

Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye ſhall find reſt to your ſouls. For my yoke is eaſy, and my burden is light.

THOUGH the influence of education and example, may diſpoſe us, to acknowledge the goſpel to be a revelation from God; it can only be rightly underſtood, or duly prized, by thoſe perſons, who feel themſelves in the circumſtances of diſtreſs, which it is deſigned to relieve. No Iſraelite would think of fleeing to a city of refuge *, till, by having unwittingly ſlain a man, he was expoſed to the reſentment of the next of kin,

* Joſhua xx. 2, 3.

the legal avenger of blood; but then, a ſenſe of his danger, would induce him, readily to avail himſelf of the appointed method of ſafety. The ſkill of a phyſician may be acknowledged, in general terms, by many; but he is applied to, only by the ſick *. Thus our Saviour's gracious invitation to come to him for reſt, will be little regarded, till we really feel ourſelves weary and heavy laden. This is a principal reaſon why the goſpel is heard with ſo much indifference. For though ſin be a grievous illneſs, and a hard bondage, yet one effect of it is, a ſtrange ſtupidity and infatuation, which renders us (like a perſon in a delirium) inſenſible of our true ſtate. It is a happy time, when the Holy Spirit, by his convincing power, removes that ſtupor, which, while it prevents us from fully perceiving our miſery, renders us likewiſe indifferent to the only mean of deliverance. Such a conviction of the guilt, and deſert of ſin, is the firſt hopeful ſymptom in a ſinner's caſe; but it is neceſſarily painful and diſtreſſing. It is not pleaſant to be weary and heavy laden; but it awakens our attention to him who ſays, *Come*

* Matt. ix. 12.

unto me, and I will give you reft, and makes us willing to take his yoke upon us.

Oxen are yoked to labour. From hence the *yoke* is a figurative expreffion to denote fervitude. Our Lord feems to ufe it here, both to intimate, our natural prejudices againft his fervice, and to obviate them. Though he fubmitted to fufferings, reproach, and death, for our fakes; though he invites us, not becaufe he has need of us, but becaufe we have need of him, and cannot be happy without him; yet our ungrateful hearts think unkindly of him. We conceive of him as a hard mafter; and fuppofe, that if we engage ourfelves to him, we muft bid farewel to pleafure, and live under a continual reftraint. His rule is deemed too ftrict, his laws too fevere; and we imagine that we could be more happy upon our own plans, than by acceeding to his. Such unjuft, unfriendly, and difhonourable thoughts of him, whofe heart is full of tendernefs, whofe bowels melt with love, are ftrong proofs of our bafenefs, blindnefs, and depravity; yet ftill he continues his invitation, *Come unto me*—As if he had faid, " Be not afraid of me. Only make the experiment, and you fhall find, that what you

have accounted my *yoke* is true liberty; and that in my ſervice, which you have avoided as burdenſome, there is no burden at all; *for my ways are ways of pleaſantneſs, and all my paths are peace.*" I have a good hope, that many of my hearers can teſtify from their own happy experience, that (according to the beautiful expreſſion in our liturgy) his ſervice is perfect freedom.

If we are really Chriſtians, Jeſus is our Maſter, our Lord, and we are his ſervants. It is in vain to call him *Lord, Lord* *, unleſs we keep his commandments. They who know him will love him; and they who love him, will deſire to pleaſe him, not by a courſe of ſervice of their own deviſing, but by accepting his revealed will, as the ſtandard and rule, to every part of which, they endeavour to conform in their tempers, and in their conduct. He is, likewiſe, our Maſter in another ſenſe; that is, he is our great Teacher; if we ſubmit to him as ſuch, we are his *diſciples* or *ſcholars*. We cannot ſerve him acceptably, unleſs we are taught by him. The philoſophers of old had their diſciples, who imbibed their ſentiments, and were therefore

* Luke vi. 46.

called

called after their names, as the Pythagoreans and Platonifts, from Pythagoras and Plato. The general name of Chriftians, which was firft affumed by the believers at Antioch * (poffibly by divine direction) intimates that they are the profeffed difciples of Chrift. If we wifh to be truly wife, to be wife unto falvation, we muft apply to him. For in this fenfe, the *difciple* or *fcholar*, *cannot be above his Mafter* †. We can learn of men no more than they can teach us. But he fays, *Learn of me*; and he cautions us againft calling any one mafter, upon earth. He does, indeed, inftruct his people by minifters and inftruments; but unlefs he is pleafed to fuperadd his influence, what we feem to learn from them only, will profit us but little. Nor are the beft of them fo thoroughly furnifhed, nor fo free from miftake, as to deferve our implicit confidence. But they whom *he* condefcends to teach, fhall learn, what no inftruction, merely human, can impart. Let us confider the peculiar, the unfpeakable, advantages of being his fcholars.

1. In the firft place, this great Teacher *can give the capacity*, requifite to the reception of

* Luke vi. 40.

his ſublime inſtructions. There is no proſpect of excelling in human arts and ſciences, without a previous, natural ability, ſuited to the ſubject. For inſtance, if a perſon has not an ear and taſte for muſic, he will make but ſmall proficiency under the beſt maſters, It will be the ſame with reſpect to the mathematics, or any branch of ſcience. A ſkilful maſter may improve and inform the ſcholar, if he be rightly diſpoſed to learn, but he cannot communicate the diſpoſition. But Jeſus can open and enliven the dulleſt mind; he teaches the blind to ſee, and the deaf to hear. By nature we are intractable, and incapable of reliſhing divine truth, however advantageouſly propoſed to us, by men like ourſelves. But happy are his ſcholars! he enables them to ſurmount all difficulties. He takes away the heart of ſtone, ſubdues the moſt obſtinate prejudices, enlightens the dark underſtanding, and inſpires a genius, and a taſte, for the ſublime and intereſting leſſons he propoſes to them. In this reſpect, as in every other, there is none *teacheth like him* *.

2. He teacheth *the moſt important things*. The ſubjects of human ſcience are, comparatively,

* Job xxxvi. 22.

tively,

tively, trivial and insignificant. We may be safely ignorant of them all. And we may acquire the knowledge of them all, without being wiser, or better, with respect to the concernments of our true happiness. Experience and observation abundantly confirm the remark of Solomon, *That he who increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow. The eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear with hearing* *. Unless the heart be seasoned and sanctified by grace, the sum total of all other acquisitions, is but *vanity and vexation of spirit* †. Human learning will neither support the mind under trouble, nor weaken its attachment to worldly things, nor controll its impetuous passions, nor overcome the fear of death. The confession of the learned Grotius, towards the close of a life spent in literary pursuits, is much more generally known, than properly attended to. He had deservedly a great name and reputation as a scholar; but his own reflection upon the result of his labours, expresses what he learnt, not from his books, and ordinary course of studies, but from the Teacher I am commending to you. He lived to leave this testimony for the admoni-

* Eccles. i. 8, 18. † Eccles. ii. 17.

tion of the learned, or to this effect. *Ah, vitam prorsus perdidi nihil agendo laboriose,* "Alas! I have wasted my whole life, in taking much pains to no purpose." But Jesus makes his scholars wise unto eternal life, and reveals that knowledge to babes, to persons of weak and confined abilities, of which, the wisdom of the world can form no idea.

3. Other teachers, as I have already hinted, can only inform the *head*; but his instructions influence the *heart*. Moral philosophers, as they are called, abound in fine words and plausible speeches, concerning the beauty of virtue, the fitness of things, temperance, benevolence, and equity. And their scholars learn to talk after them. But their fine and admired sentiments, are meer empty notions, destitute of life and efficacy, and frequently leave them as much under the tyranny of pride, passion, sensuality, envy, and malice, as any of the vulgar whom they despise for their ignorance. It is well known, to the disgrace of the morality which the world applauds, that some of their most admired sentimental writers, and teachers, have deserved to be numbered among the most abandoned and

and despicable of mankind. They have been slaves to the basest and most degrading appetites, and the tenor of their lives, has been a marked contradiction to their fine-spun theories. But Jesus Christ effectually teaches his disciples, to forsake and abhor whatever is contrary to rectitude or purity; and inspires them with love, power, and a sound mind. And if they do not talk of great things, they are enabled to perform them. Their lives are exemplary and useful, their deaths comfortable, and their memory is precious.

4. The disciples of Jesus are, or may be, *always learning*. His providence and wisdom have so disposed things, in subserviency to the purposes of his grace, that the whole world around them is as a great school, and the events of every day, with which they are connected, have a tendency and suitableness, if rightly improved, to promote their instruction. Heavenly lessons are taught and illustrated by earthly objects; nor are we capable of understanding them at present, unless the mode of instruction, be thus accommodated to our situation and weakness. The scripture * points out to us a wonderful and beautiful

* John iii. 12.

ana-

analogy between the outward viſible world of nature, and that ſpiritual ſtate which is called the kingdom of God; the former is like a book written in cypher, to which the ſcripture is the key, which when we obtain, we have the other opened to us. Thus wherever they look, ſome object preſents itſelf, which is adapted, either, to lead their thoughts directly to Jeſus, or to explain or confirm ſome paſſage in his word. So, likewiſe, the incidents of human life, the characters we know, the converſation we hear, the viciſſitudes which take place in families, cities, and nations; in a word, the occurrences, which furniſh the hiſtory of every day, afford a perpetual commentary on what the ſcriptures teach, concerning the heart of man, and the ſtate of the world as ſubject to vanity, and lying in wickedneſs; and thereby the great truths, which it behoves us to underſtand and remember, are more repeatedly and forcibly exhibited before our eyes, and brought home to our boſoms. It is the peculiar advantage of the diſciples of Chriſt, that their leſſons are always before them, and their Maſter always with them.

5. Men who are otherwiſe competently qualified for teaching, in the branches of

ſcience

ſcience they profeſs, often diſcourage and intimidate their ſcholars, by the impatience, auſterity, and diſtance of their manner. They fail in that condeſcenſion and gentleneſs, which are neceſſary to engage the attention and affection, of the timid and the volatile, or gradually to ſoften and to ſhame the perverſe. Even Moſes, though eminent for his forbearance towards the obſtinate people committed to his care, and though he loved them, and longed for their welfare, was, at times, almoſt wearied by them *. But Jeſus, who knows before-hand the weakneſs, the dulneſs, and the refractorineſs of thoſe whom he deigns to teach, to prevent their fears, is pleaſed to ſay, *Learn of* me, *for I am meek and lowly*. With what meekneſs did he converſe among his diſciples, while he was with them upon earth? He allowed them, at all times, a gracious freedom of acceſs. He bore with their miſtakes, reproved and corrected them with the greateſt mildneſs, and taught them as they were able to bear, with a kind accommodation to their prejudices; leading them on, ſtep by ſtep, and waiting for the proper ſeaſon of unfolding to them, thoſe more difficult points,

* Num. xi. 11, 12.

which,

which, for a time, appeared to them to be hard ſayings. And though he be now exalted upon his glorious throne and clothed with majeſty, ſtill his heart is made of tenderneſs, and his compaſſions ſtill abound. We are ſtill directed to think of him, not as one who cannot be touched with a feeling of our infirmities, but as exerciſing the ſame patience and ſympathy towards his diſciples now, which ſo ſignally marked his character, during his ſtate of humiliation. The compliment of the orator to a Roman emperor, though exceſſive and abſurd, when addreſſed to a ſinful worm, That they who durſt ſpeak to him, were ignorant of his greatneſs; and they who durſt not, were equally ignorant of his goodneſs, is a juſt and literal truth, if applied to our meek and gracious Saviour. If we duly conſider his greatneſs alone, it ſeems almoſt preſumption in ſuch creatures as we are, to dare to take his holy name upon our polluted lips; but then, if we have a proportionable ſenſe of his unbounded goodneſs and grace, every difficulty is overruled, and we feel a liberty of drawing near to him, though with reverence, yet with the confidence of children, when they ſpeak to an affectionate parent.

A perſon may be *meek*, though in an elevated ſituation of life; but Jeſus was likewiſe *lowly*. There was nothing in his external appearance, to intimidate the poor and the miſerable, from coming to him. He was lowly or humble. Cuſtom, which fixes the force and acceptation of words, will not readily allow us to ſpeak of humility, as applicable to the great God. Yet it is ſaid, *He humbleth himſelf to behold the things that are in heaven, and in earth* *. Humility, in ſtrictneſs of ſpeech, is an attribute of magnanimity; an indifference to the little diſtinctions by which weak and vulgar minds are effected. In the view of the *high and holy One who inhabiteth eternity* †, all diſtinctions that can obtain among creatures vaniſh; and he humbles himſelf no leſs to notice the worſhip of an angel, than the fall of a ſparrow to the ground. But we more uſually expreſs this idea by the term *condeſcenſion*. Such was the mind that was in Chriſt ‡. It belonged to his dignity, as Lord of all, to look with an equal eye upon all his creatures. None could recommend themſelves to him, by their rank, wealth or abilites, the gifts of

* Pſal. cxiii. 6. † Iſai. lvii. 15. ‡ Phil. ii. 5.

his own bounty; none were excluded from his regard, by the want of thoſe things which are in eſtimation among men. And to ſtain the pride of human glory, he was pleaſed to aſſume an humble ſtate. *Though he was rich, he made himſelf poor* *, for the ſake of thoſe whom he came into the world to ſave. In this reſpect, he teaches us by his example. *He took upon him the form of a ſervant* †, a poor and obſcure man, to abaſe our pride, to cure us of ſelfiſhneſs, and to reconcile us to the croſs.

The happy effect of his inſtructions upon thoſe who receive them, is, *Reſt to their ſouls.* This has been ſpoken to before; but as it is repeated in the text, I ſhall not entirely paſs it over here. He gives reſt to our ſouls,—By reſtoring us to our proper ſtate of dependance upon God. A ſtate of reconciliation and peace, and deliverance from guilt and fear. A ſtate of ſubjection; for till our wills are duly ſubjected to the will of God, we can have no reſt—By ſhewing us the vanity of the world, and thereby putting an end to our wearifome deſires and purſuits, after things uncertain, frequently unattainable, always

* 2 Cor. viii. 9. † Phil. ii. 7.

unſa-

unſatisfying—By a communication of ſublimer pleaſures and hopes, than the preſent ſtate of things can poſſibly afford—And laſtly, by furniſhing us with thoſe aids, motives, and encouragements, which make our duty deſirable, practicable, and pleaſant.

How truly then may it be ſaid, that *his yoke is eaſy, and his burden light!* Such a burden, as wings are to a bird, raiſing the ſoul above the low and groveling attachments, to which it was once confined. They only can rightly judge of the value of this reſt, who are capable of contraſting it, with the diſtractions and miſeries, the remorſe and forebodings, of thoſe who live without God in the world.

But we are all, by profeſſion, his ſcholars. Ought we not ſeriouſly to enquire, what we have actually learned from him? Surely the proud, the haughty, the voluptuous, and the worldly, though they have heard of his name, and may have attended on his inſtitutions, have not hitherto ſat at his feet, or drank of his Spirit. It requires no long train of examination to determine, whether you have entered into his reſt, or not. Or, if you have not yet attained it, whether you are ſeeking it in the ways of his appointment. It is a reſt for the

ſoul,

ſoul, it is a ſpiritual bleſſing, and therefore does not neceſſarily depend upon external circumſtances. Without this reſt, you muſt be reſtleſs and comfortleſs, in a palace. If you have it, you may be, at leaſt comparatively, happy in a dungeon. To day, if not before, to day, while it is called to day, hear his voice; and and while he ſays to you by his word, *Come unto me, and learn of me*, let your hearts anſwer, *Behold we come unto thee, for thou art the Lord our God* *.

* Jer. iii. 22.

SER-

PART II.

SERMON XVI.

THE LAMB OF GOD, THE GREAT ATONEMENT.

JOHN i. 29.

Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the ſin of the world!

GREAT and marvellous are the works of the Lord God almighty! We live in the midſt of them, and the little impreſſion they make upon us, ſufficiently proves our depravity. He is great in the very ſmalleſt; and there is not a plant, flower, or inſect, but bears the ſignature of infinite wiſdom and power. How ſenſibly then ſhould we be affected by the conſideration of the *Whole*, if ſin had not blinded our underſtandings, and hardened our hearts! In the beginning, when all was dark, unformed, and waſte, his

powerful word produced light, life, beauty, and order. He commanded the ſun to ſhine, and the planets to roll. The immenſity of creation is far beyond the reach of our conceptions. The innumerable ſtars, the worlds, which however large in themſelves, are, from their remoteneſs, but barely viſible, to us are of little more immediate, and known uſe, than to enlarge our idea of the greatneſs of their Author. Small, indeed, is the knowledge we have of our own ſyſtem; but we know enough to render our indifference inexcuſable. The glory of the ſun muſt ſtrike every eye, and in this enlightened age, there are few perſons, but have ſome ideas of the magnitude of the planets, and the rapidity, and regularity of their motions. Farther, the rich variety which adorns this lower creation, the dependance and relation of the ſeveral parts, and their general ſubſerviency to the accommodation of man, the principal inhabitant, together with the preſervation of individuals, and the continuance of every ſpecies of animals, are ſubjects, not above the reach of common capacities, and which afford almoſt endleſs and infinite ſcope for reflection and admiration. But the bulk of mankind regard

 them

them not. The viciſſitudes of day and night, and of the revolving ſeaſons, are, to them, matters of courſe; as if they followed each other without either cauſe or deſign. And though the philoſophers, who, profeſſedly, attach themſelves to the ſtudy of the works of nature, are overwhelmed by the traces of a wiſdom and arrangement, which they are unable to comprehend; yet few of them are led to reverential thoughts of God, by their boaſted knowledge of his creatures. Thus men *live without God in the world*, *though they live*, *and move*, *and have their being in him*, and are inceſſantly ſurrounded, by the moſt ſtriking proofs, of his preſence and energy. Perhaps an earthquake, or a hurricane, by awakening their fears, may force upon their minds a conviction of his power over them, and excite an occaſional momentary application to him; but when they think the danger over, they relapſe into their former ſtupidity.

What can engage the attention, or ſoften the obduracy, of ſuch creatures? Behold, one wonder more, greater than all the former; the laſt, the higheſt effect of divine goodneſs! God has ſo loved rebellious, ungrateful ſinners, as to appoint them a Saviour in the

perſon of his only Son. The prophets foreſaw his manifeſtation in the fleſh, and foretold the happy conſequences—that his preſence would change the wilderneſs into a fruitful field, that he was coming to give ſight to the blind, and life to the dead; to ſet the captive at liberty; to unlooſe the heavy burden; and to bleſs the weary with reſt. But this change was not to be wrought meerly by a word of power, as when he ſaid, *Let there be light, and there was light* *. It was great, to ſpeak the world from nothing; but far greater, to redeem ſinners from miſery. The ſalvation, of which he is the Author, though free to us, muſt coſt him dear. Before the *mercy* of God can be actually diſpenſed to ſuch offenders, the rights of his *juſtice*, the demands of his law, and the honour of his government, muſt be provided for. The early inſtitution and long continued uſe, of ſacrifices, had clearly pointed out the neceſſity of an atonement; but the real and proper atonement could only be made by MESSIAH. The blood of ſlaughtered animals could not take away ſin, nor diſplay the righteouſneſs of God in pardoning it. This was the ap-

* Gen. i. 3.

pointed,

pointed, covenanted work of MESSIAH, and he alone could perform it. With this view he had ſaid, *Lo I come* *. And it was in this view, when John ſaw him, that he pointed him out to his diſciples, ſaying, *Behold the Lamb of God!*

Three points offer to our conſideration,

I. The title here given to MESSIAH, *The Lamb of God.*

II. The efficacy of his ſacrifice, *He taketh away ſin.*

III. The extent of it, *The ſin of the world.*

I. He is *the Lamb of God.* The paſchal lamb, and the lambs which were daily offered, morning and evening, according to the law of Moſes, were of God's appointment; but this lamb was, likewiſe, of his providing. The others were but types. Though many, they were all inſufficient † to cleanſe the conſciences of the offerers from guilt; and they were all ſuperſeded, when MESSIAH, *by the one offering of himſelf, once for all, made an end of ſin, and brought in an everlaſting righteouſneſs,* in favour of all who believe in his name.

This title, therefore, *The Lamb of God,* refers to his voluntary ſubſtitution for ſinners,

* Pſal. xl. 7. † Heb. x. 1.

that by his sufferings and death, they who deserved to die, might obtain eternal life through him, and for his sake. Mankind were universally chargeable with transgression of the law of God, and were in a state of alienation from him. A penalty in case of disobedience, was annexed to the law they had broken; to which, they, as offenders, were therefore obnoxious. Though it would be presumptuous in such worms as we are, to determine upon principles of our own, whether the sovereign Judge of the universe, could, consistently with his own glory, remit this penalty without satisfaction, or not; yet, since he has favoured us with a revelation of his will upon the point, we may speak more confidently, and affirm, that it was not consistent with his truth and holiness, and the honour of his moral government to do it, because this is his own declaration. We may now be assured, that the forgiveness of one sinner, and, indeed, of one sin, by an act of meer mercy, and without any interposing consideration, was incompatible with the inflexibility of the law, and the truth and justice of the Lawgiver. But mercy designed the forgiveness of innumerable sinners, each of them

them chargeable with innumerable ſins. And the declaration, that God is thus merciful, was to be recorded and publickly known, through a long ſucceſſion of ages, and to extend to ſins not yet committed. An act of grace ſo general and unreſerved, might lead men (not to ſpeak of ſuperior intelligences) to diſparaging thoughts of the holineſs of God, and might even encourage them to ſin with hope of impunity, if not connected with ſome proviſion, which might ſhew, that the exerciſe of his mercy was in full harmony with the honour of all his perfections. How God could *be juſt, and yet juſtify thoſe* *, whom his own righteous conſtitution condemned, was a difficulty too great for finite underſtandings to ſolve. But herein is God glorious. His wiſdom propounded, and his love afforded, the adequate, the only poſſible expedient. He revealed to our firſt parents his purpoſe, which, in the fulneſs of time, he accompliſhed, of ſending *forth his Son made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem* ſinners from *the curſe of the law* †, by ſuſtaining it for them. Conſidering the dignity of his perſon, and the perfection of his obedience, his ſufferings and

* Rom. iii. 26. † Gal. iv. 4.

death for ſins not his own, diſplayed the heinouſneſs of ſin, and the ſevere diſpleaſure of God againſt it, in a much ſtronger light, than the execution of the ſentence upon the offenders could poſſibly do. It diſplays, likewiſe, the juſtice of this ſentence, ſince neither the dignity, nor the holineſs of the ſurety, could exempt him from ſuffering; and that though he was the beloved of God, he was not ſpared. This is what I underſtand by atonement and ſatisfaction for ſin.

II. The efficacy of this atonement is compleat. *The Lamb of God*, thus ſlain, *taketh away ſin*; both with reſpect to its guilt, and its defilement. The Iſraelites, by looking to the braſen ſerpent *, were ſaved from death, and healed of their wounds. *The Lamb of God* is an object, propoſed, not to our bodily ſight, but to the eye of the mind, which, indeed, in fallen man, is naturally blind; but the goſpel meſſage, enlivened by the powerful agency of the Holy Spirit, is appointed to open it. *He who* thus *ſeeth the Son, and believeth on him* †, is delivered from guilt and condemnation, is juſtified from all ſin. He is warranted to plead the ſufferings of *the*

* Num. xxi. 9. † John vi. 40.

Lamb

Lamb of God in bar of his own; the whole of the Saviour's obedience unto death, as the ground and title of his acceptance unto life. Guilt or obnoxiousneſs to puniſhment being removed, the ſoul has an open way of acceſs to God, and is prepared to receive bleſſings from him. For as the ſun, the fountain of light, fills the eye that was before blind, the inſtant it receives ſight; ſo God, who is the fountain of goodneſs, enlightens all his intelligent creatures according to their capacity, unleſs they are by ſin blinded, and rendered incapable of communion with him. The Saviour is now received and enthroned in the heart, and from his fulneſs, the life of grace is derived and maintained. Thus not only the guilt, but the love of ſin, and its dominion, are taken away, ſubdued by grace, and cordially renounced by the believing, pardoned ſinner. The blood, which frees him from diſtreſs, preſerves a remembrance of the great danger and miſery, from which he has been delivered, warm upon his heart; inſpires him with gratitude to his Deliverer; and furniſhes with an abiding and conſtraining motive, for cheerful and univerſal obedience.

III.

III. The designed extent of this gratuitous removal of sin, by the oblation of *the Lamb of God*, is expressed in a large and indefinite manner. *He taketh away the sin of the world.* Many of my hearers need not be told, what fierce and voluminous disputes have been maintained, concerning the extent of the death of Christ. I am afraid the advantages of such controversies, have not been answerable to the zeal of the disputants. For myself, I wish to be known, by no name, but that of a Christian; and implicitly to adopt no system but the Bible. I usually endeavour to preach to the heart and the conscience, and to wave, as much as I can, all controversial points. But as the subject now lies directly before me, I shall embrace the occasion, and simply, and honestly, open to you the sentiments of my heart concerning it.

If because the death of Christ is here said to take away *the sin of the world*, or, (as this evangelist expresses it in another place) the *whole world* *, it be inferred, that he actually designed and intended the salvation of all men, such an inference would be contradicted by fact. For it is certain that all men will not

* 1 John ii. 2.

be

be ſaved *. It is to be feared, that the greater part of thoſe, to whom the word of his ſalvation is ſent, periſh in their ſins. If, therefore, he cannot be diſappointed of his purpoſe, ſince many do periſh, it could not be his fixed deſign, that all men ſhould be finally and abſolutely ſaved.

The exceeding great number, once dead in treſpaſſes and ſins, who ſhall be found on his right hand, at the great day of his appearance, are frequently ſpoken of in appropriate and peculiar language. They are ſtyled his ſheep †, for whom he laid down his life; his elect ‡, his own §; thoſe to whom it is given to believe in his name ||, and, concerning whom, it was *the Father's good pleaſure to predeſtinate them to the adoption of children* **. By nature, *they are children of wrath, even as others* ⨤; and no more diſpoſed in themſelves to receive the truth, than thoſe who obſtinately and finally reject it. Whenever they become willing they are made ſo, *in a day of* divine *power* ‡‡; and wherein they differ, it is grace *that makes them to differ* §§. Paſſages in the

* Matt. vii. 13, 14. † John x. 11, 16. ‡ Mark xiii. 27. § John xiii. 1. || Phil. i. 29. ** Eph. i. 5. ⨤ Eph. ii. 3. ‡‡ Pſal. cx. 3. §§ 1 Cor. iv. 7.

ſcrip-

scripture to this purpose, are innumerable; and though much ingenuity has been employed, to soften them, and to make them speak the language of an hypothesis, they are so plain in themselves, *that he who runs may read*. It is not the language of conjecture, but of inspiration, that they whom the Lord God *did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son* *. And though some serious persons perplex themselves with needless and painful reasonings, with respect to the sovereignty of God in his conduct towards mankind, they all, if truly spiritual and enlightened, stand upon this very ground, in their own experience. Many, who seem to differ from us in the way of argumentation, perfectly accord with us, when they simply speak of what God has done for their souls. They know, and acknowledge, as readily as we, that they were first found of him when they sought him not; and that otherwise, they neither should, nor could, have sought him at all; nor can they give any better reason than this, why they are saved out of the world, *That it pleased the Lord to make them his people* †.

* Rom. viii. 29. † 1 Sam. xii. 22.

But,

But, on the other hand, I cannot think the ſenſe of the expreſſion is ſufficiently explained, by ſaying, That the world, and the whole world, is ſpoken of, to teach us, that the ſacrifice of *the Lamb of God* was not confined, like the Levitical offerings, to the nation of Iſrael only; but that it is available for the ſins of a determinate number of perſons, called the *Elect*, who are ſcattered among many nations, and found, under a great variety of ſtates and circumſtances in human life. This is, undoubtedly, the truth, ſo far as it goes; but not, I apprehend, fully agreeable to the ſcriptural manner of repreſentation. That there is an election of grace, we are plainly taught; yet, it is not ſaid, *that Jeſus Chriſt came into the world to ſave* the elect, but that he came to ſave *ſinners*, to *ſeek and to ſave them that are loſt* *. Upon this ground, I conceive that miniſters have a warrant to preach the goſpel to every human creature, and to addreſs the conſcience of every man in the ſight of God: and that every perſon who hears this goſpel, has thereby a warrant, an encouragement, yea, a command, to apply to Jeſus Chriſt for ſalvation. And that they who re-

* 1 Tim. i. 15. Luke xix. 10.

fuſe,

fuſe, thereby exclude themſelves, and periſh, not becauſe they never had, nor poſſibly could have any intereſt in his atonement, but, ſimply, becauſe they will not come unto him that they may have life. I know ſomething of the cavils and curious reaſonings which obtain upon this ſubject, and I know I may be preſſed with difficulties, which I cannot reſolve to the full ſatisfaction of enquiring and ſpeculative ſpirits. I am not diſheartened, by meeting with ſome things, beyond the graſp of my ſcanty powers, in a book, which I believe to be inſpired by him, whoſe ways and thoughts are higher than ours, *as the heavens are higher than the earth* *. But, I believe, that vain reaſonings, ſelf-will, an attachment to names and parties, and a diſpoſition to draw our ſentiments from human ſyſtems, rather than to form them by a cloſe and humble ſtudy of the Bible, with prayer for divine teaching, are the chief ſources of our perplexities and diſputes.

The extent of the atonement is frequently repreſented, as if a calculation had been made, how much ſuffering was neceſſary for the ſurety to endure, in order exactly to expiate,

* Iſai. lv. 8, 9.

the

the aggregate number of all the ſins, of all the elect; that ſo much he ſuffered preciſely, and no more; and that when this requiſition was compleatly anſwered, he ſaid, *It is finiſhed, bowed his head, and gave up the ghoſt* *. But this nicety of computation does not ſeem analogous to that unbounded magnificence and grandeur, which overwhelms the attentive mind, in the contemplation of the divine conduct in the natural world. When God waters the earth, he waters it *abundantly* †. He does not reſtrain the rain to cultivated, or improveable ſpots, but, with a profuſion of bounty worthy of himſelf, his clouds pour down water, with equal abundance, upon the barren mountain, the lonely deſert, and the pathleſs ocean. Why may we not ſay with the ſcripture, that Chriſt died *to declare the righteouſneſs of God* ‡, to manifeſt that he is juſt in juſtifying the ungodly, who believe in Jeſus? And for any thing we know to the contrary, the very ſame diſplay of the evil and demerit of ſin, by the Redeemer's agonies and death, might have been equally neceſſary, though the number of the elect were much ſmaller, than it will appear to be, when they

* John xix. 30. † Pſal. lxv. 10. ‡ Rom. iii. 25, 26.

ſhall

ſhall all meet before the throne of glory. If God had formed this earth for the reſidence of one man only; had it been his pleaſure to afford him the ſame *kind* and *degree* of light which we enjoy; the ſame glorious ſun, which is now ſufficient to enlighten and comfort the millions of mankind, would have been neceſſary for the accommodation of that one perſon. So, perhaps, had it been his pleaſure to ſave but one ſinner, in a way that ſhould give the higheſt poſſible diſcovery of his juſtice, and of his mercy, this could have been done by no other method, than that which he has choſen for the ſalvation of the innumerable multitudes, who will, in the great day, unite in the ſong of praiſe, to the Lamb *who loved them, and waſhed them from their ſins in his own blood.* As the ſun has a ſufficiency of light for eyes, (if there were ſo many capable of beholding it) equal in number to the leaves upon the trees, and the blades of graſs that grow upon the earth; ſo in Jeſus, the Sun of Righteouſneſs, *there is plenteous redemption*, he *is rich in mercy to all that call upon him* *; and he invites ſinners, without exception, to whom the word of his ſalvation

* Pſal. cxxx. 7. Rom. x. 12.

is ſent, even to the ends of the earth, to *look unto him, that they may be ſaved* *.

Under the goſpel diſpenſation, and by it, God commands *all men, every where, to repent* †. All men, therefore, every where, are encouraged to hope for forgiveneſs, according to the conſtitution preſcribed by the goſpel; otherwiſe repentance would be both impracticable and unavailing. And, therefore, the command to repent, implies a warrant to believe in the name of Jeſus, as taking away the ſin of the world. Let it not be ſaid, that to call upon men to believe, which is an act beyond their natural power, is to mock them. There are preſcribed means for the obtaining of faith, which it is not beyond their natural power to comply with, if they are not wilfully obſtinate. We have the word of God for our authority. *God cannot be mocked* ‡, neither doth he mock his creatures. Our Lord did not mock the young Ruler, when he told him, that if he would ſell his poſſeſſions upon earth, and follow him, *he ſhould have treaſure in heaven* §. Had this Ruler no *power* to ſell his poſſeſſions? I doubt not, but that he

* Iſai. xlv. 22. † Acts xvii. 30. ‡ Gal. vi. 7.
§ Luke xviii. 22.

himſelf, thought he had power to ſell them if he pleaſed. But while he loved his money better than he loved Chriſt, and preferred earthly treaſures to heavenly, he had no *will* to part with them. And a want of *will*, in a moral agent, is *a want of power* in the ſtrongeſt ſenſe. Let none preſume to offer ſuch excuſes to their Maker, as they would not accept in their own concerns. If you ſay of a man, he is ſuch a liar that he cannot ſpeak a word of truth; ſo profane that he cannot ſpeak without an oath; ſo diſhoneſt that he cannot omit one opportunity of cheating or ſtealing; do you ſpeak of this diſability to good, as an extenuation, and becauſe you think it renders him free from blame? Surely you think the more he is diſinclined to good; and habituated to evil, the worſe he is. A man that *can* ſpeak lies and perjury, that can deceive and rob, but is ſuch an enemy to truth and goodneſs, that he can do nothing that is kind or upright, muſt be a ſhocking character indeed! Judge not more favourably of yourſelf if you *can* love the world and ſenſual pleaſure, but *cannot* love God. If you *can* fear a worm like yourſelf, but live without the fear of God; if you can

boldly trample upon his laws, but *will* not, and therefore *cannot* humble yourſelf before him, and ſeek his mercy, in the way of his appointment.

We cannot aſcribe too much to the grace of God; but we ſhould be careful, that under a ſemblance of exalting his grace, we do not furniſh the ſlothful and unfaithful *, with excuſes for their wilfulneſs and wickedneſs. God is gracious; but let man be juſtly reſponſible for his own evil, and not preſume to ſtate his caſe ſo, as would, by juſt conſequence, repreſent the holy God as being the cauſe of the ſin, which he hates and forbids.

The whole may be ſummed up in two points, which I commend to your ſerious attention; which it muſt be the buſineſs of my life to enforce, and which, I truſt, I ſhall not repent of having enforced, either at the hour of death, or in the day of judgment, when I muſt give an account of my preaching, and you of what you have heard in this place.

1. That ſalvation is, indeed, wholly of grace. The gift of a Saviour, the firſt dawn of light into the heart, all the ſupports and ſupplies needful for carrying on the work,

* Matt. xxv. 16.

from the foundation to the top-ſtone, all is of free grace.

2. That now *the Lamb of God* is preached to you, as taking away the ſin of the world, if you reject him, which may the Lord forbid! I ſay, if you reject him, your blood will be upon your own head. You are warned, you are invited. Dare not to ſay, *Why doth he yet find fault, for who hath reſiſted his will* *? If he will ſave me, I ſhall be ſaved; if not, what can I do? God is merciful, but he is alſo holy and juſt; he is almighty, but his infinite power is combined with wiſdom, and regulated by the great deſigns of his government. He can do, innumerable things, which, he will not do. What he will do (ſo far as we are concerned) his word informs us, *and not one jot or tittle thereof ſhall fail* †.

* Rom. ix. 19.

† Matt. v. 18.

SERMON XVII.

MESSIAH DESPISED, AND REJECTED OF MEN.

ISAIAH liii. 3.

He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.

THE Heathen moralists, ignorant of the character and perfections of God, the true dignity and immortality of the soul, and the root and extent of human depravity, had no better foundation, for what they called virtue, than pride; no higher aim in their regulations, than the interests of society, and the conduct of civil life. They expressed, indeed, occasionally, some sentiments of a superior kind; but these, however just and valuable upon the principles of revelation, were delusive and impracticable upon their own. And Brutus, one of the

moſt admired characters of antiquity, confeſſed, juſt before he put an end to his own life, that having long been enamoured of virtue as a real good, he found it, at laſt, to be but an empty name. But though they had ſo little ſatisfaction, or ſucceſs, in the purſuit of virtue, they were ſo pleaſed with the idea they formed of it, as generally to ſuppoſe, that if virtue could become viſible, it would neceſſarily engage the eſteem and admiration of mankind.

There was, however, one remarkable exception to this opinion. The wiſdom of Socrates, ſeems to have been, in many reſpects, different from that of the bulk of their philoſophers. Socrates having expreſſed his idea of a perfect character, a truly virtuous man, ventured to predict the reception ſuch a perſon, if ſuch a one could ever be found, would meet with from the world. And he thought, that his practice, would be ſo diſſimilar to that of other men; his teſtimony againſt their wickedneſs, ſo ſtrong, and his endeavours to reform them, ſo importunate and unwelcome, that, inſtead of being univerſally admired, he would be diſliked and hated. That mankind were too degenerate, and too obſtinate, to bear, either the example, or

or the reproof, of ſuch a perſon; and would moſt probably revile and perſecute him, and put him to death as an enemy to their peace.

In this inſtance, the judgment of Socrates accords with the language of the Old, and with the hiſtory of the New Teſtament. MESSIAH was this perfect character. As ſuch Iſaiah deſcribes him. He likewiſe foreſaw how he would be treated, and foretold that he would be *numbered with tranſgreſſors*, deſpiſed and rejected, by the very people, who were eye-witneſſes of his upright and benevolent conduct. And thus, in fact, it proved. When Jeſus was upon earth, true virtue and goodneſs were viſibly diſplayed; and thereby, the wickedneſs of man became ſignally conſpicuous. For they, among whom he was converſant, *preferred a robber and a murderer to him* *. They preſerved Barabbas, who had been juſtly doomed to die for enormous crimes; and they nailed Jeſus, in his ſtead, to the croſs.

When MESSIAH appeared, the Jews profeſſed to blame the wickedneſs of their forefathers, who had oppoſed and ſlain the prophets. If they regretted the ill treatment

* John xviii. 40.

the *servants* of God had formerly received, might it not be hoped that *they would reverence his Son*?* concerning whom, under this character of MESSIAH, their expectations were raised by the scriptures, which were read in their synagogues every sabbath-day?

But *he was despised and rejected of men.* Angels sung praises at his birth, *but men despised him.* He took not upon him the nature of angels, but of man; *yet men rejected him.* Sinful, helpless men, *rejected and despised* the only Saviour. *He came to his own, but his own received him not.* How lamentable and fatal was their obstinacy! Pretended † MESSIAHS were eagerly regarded and followed by them, but the true MESSIAH *was despised and rejected of men!*

Let us consider the clauses of the text separately, in the order in which we read them.

I. *He was despised and rejected of men.* It would be a great mistake to imagine that the Jews were the only people capable of this ingratitude and obstinacy. If any person here thinks, surely I would not have despised him, had I seen his wonderful works, and heard him speak as never man spake; possibly that

* Matt. xxi. 37. † John v. 43.

thought may prove you to be of the very ſame ſpirit with thoſe, who, while they thirſted for his blood, ignorantly preſumed, that if they had lived in the days of their fore-fathers, they would not have joined with them in perſecuting the prophets *. The prejudices which operated ſo ſtrongly againſt our Lord's miſſion and miniſtry, were not peculiar to the people of one age, or country, but ſuch as are deeply rooted in the nature of fallen man. The ſame principles which influenced the Jews to oppoſe and deſpiſe his perſon, ſtill influence multitudes to ſlight and oppoſe the doctrine which he taught, and which he commanded his diſciples to preach, and perpetuate to the end of the world. In proof of this, it will be ſufficient to aſſign ſome of the principal cauſes of the contempt and hatred which he met with from the men of that generation.

1. They *deſpiſed him* for, what they accounted, *the meanneſs of his appearance*. Though rich in himſelf, he became poor for our ſakes, and his poverty made him contemptible in their eyes. They expected MESSIAH would appear with external pomp

* Matt. xxiii. 31.

and power. But when they saw him, they scorned him, saying, *Is not this the carpenter's son* *? He who had not money to pay the tribute demanded † of him, nor a house wherein to lay his head, was of small esteem with those who were covetous, proud of worldly distinctions, and fond of the praise and admiration of men.

2. Their contempt was heightened when this poor man publicly asserted his proper *character and claim*, demanded their attention and homage, and styled himself in a peculiar sense *the Son of God, the resurrection and the life* ‡. For this seeming inconsistence between the appearance he made, and the honours he assumed, they treated him as a demoniac and a mad-man §. Their language strongly expressed their sentiments of him, when they asked him with disdain, *Art thou greater than our father Abraham? Whom makest thou thyself* ‖?

3. They objected to him the *low state and former characters of his followers*. Some of them were of low rank in life. The most of those who constantly attended him were poor

* Matt. xiii. 55. † Matt. xvii. 27. ‡ John v. 18. xi. 25. § John x. 20. ‖ John viii. 53.

fisher-

fiſhermen. Others had been of bad repute, publicans and open ſinners. For this they reproached him, and thought they were fully juſtified in their contempt, while they could ſay, *Have any of the rulers or Phariſees believed on him* * ?

4. They were farther exaſperated againſt him, by the *authority* and *ſeverity* with which he taught. It is true, he was gentle and meek to all who felt their need of his help, or ſincerely deſired his inſtruction. He received them without exception, and treated them with the greateſt tenderneſs. But he vindicated the honour of the law of God, from the corrupt doctrine and tradition of their profeſſed teachers. He expoſed and unmaſked the hypocriſy of their moſt admired characters, and compared the men who were in the higheſt reputation, for wiſdom and ſanctity, to whited ſepulchres, warning the people againſt them as blind guides and deceivers.

5. Theſe blind guides ſtrengthened the prejudices of their blind followers againſt him, by miſrepreſentation. They attempted to avail themſelves of the ſcripture, when they thought it would anſwer their purpoſe.

* John vii. 48.

They, eagerly, made the moſt of a prevailing miſtake, that Jeſus was born in Galilee, becauſe he was brought up in Nazareth from his infancy. This they urged as a proof that he could not be MESSIAH, whom the prophets had declared was to be born at Bethlehem in Judea. When he healed diſeaſes on the ſabbath day, they repreſented the effects of his compaſſion, as a breach of that ſtrict obſervance of the ſabbath, which was enjoined by the law of Moſes, and that therefore he could not be of God *. And when they were not able to deny the reality of his wonderful works, they aſcribed them to the agency of Satan †. We, at this diſtance of time, can eaſily perceive the folly, and madneſs of their attempts. But the Scribes and Phariſees were the public, authorized doctors and teachers of the people, and were ſupported by the eccleſiaſtical and civil power; or, as we ſhould now expreſs it, by church and ſtate. The people were not apt to ſuſpect their leaders, whom they thought wiſer, and better than themſelves. Or, if ſometimes they heſitated, were impreſſed by the majeſty of his words, or the evidence of his miraculous

* John ix. 16. † Matt. xii. 24.

works,

works, and conſtrained to ſay, *Is not this the Son of David* *? they were ſoon intimidated and ſilenced by canons and laws. For it was carefully enacted, in order to keep them in ſubjection, that whoever acknowledged him *ſhould be put out of the ſynagogues* †; that is, according to our modern language, excommunicated. This among the Jews, as it has often ſince been among Chriſtians, was a puniſhment, which drew after it terrible conſequences. A man muſt be in good earneſt, or rather taught and ſupported by the grace of God, who could reſiſt ſuch arguments as theſe.

Theſe things are eaſily applicable to the church-hiſtory of ſucceeding times. The goſpel of Chriſt has often been, and is, to this day, rejected and deſpiſed upon ſimilar grounds. Its ſimplicity and plainneſs, and the manner of its propoſal, adapted to the uſe and capacity of the vulgar, offend thoſe who are wiſe in their own conceit, and proud of their underſtanding and taſte. At the ſame time they are equally diſguſted by the ſublimity of its doctrines, which will not ſubmit to the teſt of their vain reaſonings, and

* Matt. xii. 23. † John ix. 22. xii. 48.

can

can only be received by humble faith. The faithfulneſs and freedom which its miniſters are enjoined to uſe, give great offence likewiſe. And becauſe they cannot comply with the humours of thoſe, who wiſh them to propheſy ſmooth things, and deceits, they are accounted cenſorious, uncharitable, and diſturbers of the public peace. Again, the diſlike and oppoſition it frequently meets with from perſons of great titles and high ſtations, deter multitudes from perſuing thoſe inquiries, which ſome conviction of the truth would prompt them to, were they not diſcouraged by the fear of conſequences. How often has a dread of the diſpleaſure of doctors, biſhops, univerſities, councils, and popes, or an ignorant, ſlaviſh deference to their judgment or deciſions, prevented people from following that light, which had began to force itſelf upon their conſciences? How few among thoſe of reputation for wiſdom and learning, how few of the great, and opulent, have encouraged, or eſpouſed the doctrine of the croſs? It is, therefore, more properly, a ſubject for lamentation, than for wonder, that this way is deſpiſed, *and almoſt*

every

every where spoken against *. Farther, as the bulk of those who embrace it are of low condition, so, many of them, are as free to confess to the praise of the grace of God, as others can be to urge it to their reproach, that till they knew and received this despised gospel, their characters and practices were vile. Lastly, what unhappy subtilty has been employed, in a way of reason and argument, with an appeal to detached and perverted passages of scripture, to misrepresent the work of the Holy Spirit, as folly, hypocrisy, or enthusiasm; and even to charge the gospel itself with giving encouragement to a licentious conduct? In short, the spirit of the world, the arts and influence of designing men, are so powerful, that what our Lord said in Judea, holds equally true in Christendom, *Blessed is he who is not offended in me* † !

I have reserved, to a distinct paragraph, the mention of one cause why the gospel is frequently despised and reproached. Because though it be no less unjust and unreasonable, than those which I have recited, it is more immediately incumbent upon all who name the name of Christ, to prevent it as much as

* Acts xxviii. 22. † Matt. xi. 6.

pos-

possible; I mean, the scandal which arises from the miscarriages of those who profess it. Offences of this kind must come, *but wo to them by whom they come* *. There were pretended Christians, even in the apostles times, who were *enemies to the cross of Christ* †, and by their evil conduct, caused the ways of truth to be evil spoken of. And, therefore, we cannot be surprized that there are such persons now. But *you that love the Lord hate evil* ‡. There are many who watch for your halting, and are ready to say, There! there! so we would have it. It will be in vain for ministers to declare that the doctrines of grace are doctrines according to godliness, unless our testimony is supported by the tempers and conduct of our people: the world will probably judge, rather by what they see in you, than by what they hear from us. Nor will it suffice that they cannot say you are an adulterer, a drunkard, a miser, or a cheat. If you espouse our doctrine, they will expect you to be humble, meek, patient, and benevolent; to find integrity in all your dealings, and a punctual discharge of your duty in every branch of relative life. What

* Matt. xviii. 7. † Phil. iii. 18. ‡ Psal. xcvii. 10.

must

muſt the world think of our principles, if they who avow them are fretful, envious, cenſorious, diſcontented, ſlothful, or unfaithful; or, if they are niggardly and hard-hearted, or voluptuous and diſſolute, or implacable and revengeful! They who thus *lay ſtumbling-blocks before the blind* *, and confirm the prejudices of the ignorant, will have much to anſwer for.

II. It is farther ſaid, He was *a man of ſorrows, and acquainted with grief.* He was ſurrounded with ſorrows on every ſide, and grief was his intimate, inſeparable companion. Surely this conſideration, if any, will animate us *to endure the croſs, and to deſpiſe the ſhame* we may be expoſed to for his ſake. The illuſtration of this ſubject will offer more fully in the ſequel. It ſhall ſuffice, at preſent, to aſſign three cauſes for his continual ſorrows.

1. The *outward courſe of life*, to which he ſubmitted, for the ſake of ſinners, expoſed him to want, wearineſs, contempt, and oppoſition. And though his reſignation, and patience, were perfect, yet he was truly a man, and partaker of our nature, with all its affections and ſenſibilities, which do not imply

* Lev. xix. 14.

 ſin.

ſin. His feelings, therefore, were human, ſimilar to our own in ſimilar circumſtances, and they were often painfully exerciſed. Once, and again, we read that he was hungry and had no food; he was thirſty * and was nearly refuſed a little water to drink, when wearied with his journeying in the heat of the day. His character was aſperſed, his perſon deſpiſed, his words inſidiouſly wreſted, his actions miſrepreſented. He was miſunderſtood even by his friends, betrayed by one diſciple, denied by another, and forſaken by the reſt †. It is hardly poſſible for his followers to meet with any outward trial, which may not remind them, of ſome part of the hiſtory of their Lord and maſter, *who left them an example of ſuffering, that they ſhould* cheerfully *follow his ſteps* ‡.

2. His *perfect knowledge* and *foreſight* of thoſe ſufferings, which we, emphatically, call, *His Paſſion.* How often does he ſpeak of them, and deſcribe the circumſtances as if they were actually preſent? Futurity is, in mercy, concealed from us. It would often bereave us of all preſent comfort, if we knew what the next year, or, perhaps, what the

* Matt. iv. 9. xxi. 18. John iv. 2. † John vii. 5. ‡ 1 Pet. ii. 21.

next

next day would bring forth. If ſome of you, could have foreſeen, many years ago, what you have ſince been brought through, you would probably have ſunk under the apprehenſion; or, the ſtouteſt of us, might ſink now, if we were certainly to know what may be yet before us. But Jeſus, long before he made atonement for our ſins, had counted the coſt. And though his love determined him to ſave us, the proſpect, which was continually preſent to his view, of the approaching unutterable agonies of his ſoul, of all that he muſt endure from God, from the powers of darkneſs and from wicked men, when he ſhould *be made a curſe for us to redeem us from the curſe of the law* *; I ſay, this tremendous proſpect, was, doubtleſs, a perpetual ſource of ſorrow.

3. *The frame of his ſpirit.* Whoever has a meaſure of the mind that was in Chriſt, muſt be proportionally burdened and grieved, like righteous Lot in Sodom †, with the wickedneſs around him, if he lives in ſociety. Who that has any regard for the honour of God, or the ſouls of men, can hear and ſee what paſſes every hour; how the authority of God

* Gal. iii. 13. † 2 Pet. ii. 8.

is affronted, his goodness abused, and his mercy despised, without emotions of grief and compassion? If we are spiritually-minded, we must be thus affected; and we should be more so, if we were more spiritual. But the holiness of MESSIAH, and, consequently, his hatred of sin, was absolutely perfect. His view, of the guilt and misery of sinners, was, likewise, comprehensive and clear. How must he be therefore grieved, by the wickedness and insensibility, of those with whom he daily conversed! especially as he not only observed the outward conduct of men, but had an intimate knowledge of the evil heart, which is hidden from us. In this sense, his sufferings and sorrows began with his early years, and continued throughout the whole of his life. He undoubtedly could say, with an emphasis peculiar to himself, *I beheld the transgressors and was grieved; Rivers of waters run down my eyes, because men keep not thy law* *.

We call ourselves the followers and servants of him, who was despised of men, and encompassed with sorrows. And shall we then *seek great things for ourselves* †, as if we belonged to the present world, and expected no

* Psal. cxix. 156, 158. † Jer. xlv. 5.

portion

portion beyond it? Or ſhall we be tremblingly alive to the opinion of our fellow-creatures, and think it a great hardſhip, if it be our lot to ſuffer ſhame, for his ſake, who endured the croſs, and deſpiſed the ſhame for us? Rather may we account ſuch diſgrace our glory, and every loſs and ſuffering, that we may endure for him, a gain. While on the other hand, we learn with the apoſtle Paul, to eſteem every gain and honour this world can afford, *to be but loſs, and dung, in compariſon of the excellency of the knowledge of Chriſt Jeſus our Lord* *.

* Phil. iii. 8.



SERMON XVIII.

VOLUNTARY SUFFERING.

ISAIAH l. 6.

I gave my back to the ſmiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from ſhame and ſpitting.

THAT which often paſſes amongſt men for reſolution, and the proof of a noble, courageous ſpirit, is, in reality, the effect and mark of a weak and little mind. At leaſt, it is chiefly owing to the preſence of certain circumſtances, which have a greater influence upon the conduct, than any inherent principle. Thus, many perſons, who appear to ſet death and danger at defiance in the hour of battle, while they are animated by the examples of thoſe around them, and inſtigated by a fear of the puniſhment or ſhame they

would incur if they deserted their post; upon a change of situation, as for instance, on a bed of sickness, discover no traces of the heroism for which they were before applauded, but tremble at the leisurely approach of death, though they were thought to despise it under a different form. It was not true fortitude, it was rather a contemptible pusillanimity, that determined the celebrated Cato to destroy himself. He was afraid of Cæsar; his dread of him, after his victories, was so great, that he durst not look him in the face; and, therefore, he killed himself to avoid him. To the same meanness of sentiment, we may confidently ascribe, the pretended gallantry of modern duellists. They fight, not because they are not afraid of death, but because they are impelled by another fear, which makes a greater impression upon a feeble, irresolute mind. They live upon the opinion of their fellow-creatures, and feel themselves too weak, to bear the contempt they should meet with, from the circle of their acquaintance, if they should decline acting upon the false principles of honour, which, pride and folly have established. They have not resolution sufficient, to act the part which conscience and reason

reaſon would dictate, and, therefore, hazard life, and every thing that is dear to them, as men, rather than dare to withſtand the prevalence of an abſurd and brutal cuſtom.

A patient enduring of affliction, and eſpecially of diſgrace and contempt, to which the characters the world moſt admire, are confeſſedly unequal, is a much ſurer proof of true fortitude, than any of thoſe actions which the love of praiſe, the fear of man, or even a mercenary attachment to lucre, are capable of producing. True *Magnanimity* is evidenced by the real importance of the end it propoſes, and by the ſteadineſs with which it purſues the proper means of attaining that end; undiſturbed and unwearied by difficulty, danger, or pain, and equally indifferent to the cenſure, or ſcorn, of incompetent judges. This greatneſs of mind is eſſential and peculiar to the character of the Chriſtian. I mean the Chriſtian who deſerves the name. His ends are great and ſublime, to glorify God, to obtain nearer communion with him, and to advance in conformity to his holy will. To attain theſe ends, he employs the means preſcribed by the Lord, he waits at Wiſdom's

gates,

gates *, and walks in the paths of dependance and obedience. He, therefore, cannot conform to the prevailing maxims and purfuits of the many, and is liable to be hated and fcorned for his fingularity. But he neither courts the fmiles of men, nor fhrinks at the thought of their difpleafure. He loves his fellow-creatures, and is ready to do them every kind office in his power; but he cannot fear them, becaufe he fears the Lord God.

But this life the Chriftian lives *by faith in the Son of God* †. Jefus is the fource of his wifdom and ftrength. He, likewife, is his exemplar. He is crucified to the world by the crofs of Chrift; and a principal reafon of his indifference to the opinion of the world, is, the confideration of the manner in which his Lord was treated by it. He is the follower of him, who faid, *I gave my back to the fmiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair, I hid not my face from fhame and fpitting.*

We may obferve, from the words, that the humiliation of MESSIAH was *voluntary*, and that it was *extreme*.

I. With refpect to his engagement, as the Mediator between God and finners, a great

* Prov. viii. 34. † Gal. ii. 20.

work

work was given him to do, and he became refponfible; and, therefore, in this fenfe, bound, and under obligation. But his compliance was, likewife, *voluntary*, for he gave himfelf up freely to fuffer, the juft for the unjuft. Could he have relinquifhed our caufe, and left us to the deferved confequence of our fins, in the trying hour, when his enemies feized upon him, legions of angels *, had they been wanted, would have appeared for his refcue. But if he was determined to fave others, then his own fufferings were unavoidable. Men, in the profecution of their defigns, often meet with unexpected difficulties in their way; which, though they encounter with fome cheerfulnefs, in hope of furmounting them, and carrying their point at laft, are confidered as impediments; but the fufferings of MESSIAH, were effentially neceffary to the accomplifhment of his great defigns, precifely determined, and prefent to his view before-hand, fo that (as I lately obferved) there was not a fingle circumftance that happened to him, unawares. He knew that no blood but his own could make atonement for fin, that nothing lefs than his humi-

* Matt. xxvi. 53.

liation

liation could expiate our pride; that if he did not *thus* suffer, sinners must inevitably perish; and, therefore, (such was his love!) he cheerfully and voluntarily *gave his back to the smiters, and his cheeks to them that plucked off the hair.* Two designs of vast importance filled his mind, the completion of them was that joy set before him, for the sake of which, *he made himself of no reputation, endured the cross, and despised the shame.* These were, the glory of God, and the salvation of sinners.

1. The highest end of his mediation was to display the glory of the divine character in the strongest light, to afford to all intelligent creatures *, the brightest manifestation they are capable of receiving, of the manifold wisdom of God, his holiness, justice, truth, and love, the stability and excellence of his moral government, all mutually illustrating each other, as combined and shining forth in *his* person, and in his mediatorial work. Much of the glory of God may be seen, by an enlightened eye, in creation, much in his providential rule and care over his creatures; but the *brightness* of his glory †, the express and full discovery of his perfections, can only be known by Jesus Christ,

* Eph. iii. 10. † John i. 18. Heb. i. 3.

Chriſt, and the revelation which God has given of himſelf, to the world, by him. And, accordingly, we are aſſured, that the angels, whoſe knowledge of the natural world is, doubtleſs, vaſtly ſuperior to ours, deſire to look into theſe things; and that the manifold wiſdom of God is ſuper-eminently made known to principalities and powers, in heaven, by the diſpenſation of his grace to the church redeemed from the earth.

2. Subordinate to this great deſign, cloſely connected with it, and the principal effect for which it will be admired and magnified to eternity, is the compleat and everlaſting ſalvation of that multitude of miſerable ſinners, who, according to the purpoſe of God, and by the working of his mighty power, ſhall believe in this Saviour; and who, renouncing every other hope, ſhall put their truſt in him, upon the warrant of the promiſe and command of God, and yield themſelves to be his willing and devoted people. Many are their tribulations in the preſent life, but they ſhall be delivered out of them all; they ſhall overcome, they ſhall be more than conquerors, *by the blood of the Lamb, and the word of his*

his teſtimony *; and then they ſhall ſhine, like the ſun, in the kingdom of heaven. The conſummation of their happineſs, is a branch of the joy which was ſet before him. For their ſakes, that they might be happy, that he may be admired in them, and by them, to the glory of God, who is all in all, he voluntarily ſubſtituted himſelf to ſufferings and death. He endured the croſs, and he deſpiſed the ſhame. *He gave his back to the ſmiters, his cheeks to them that plucked off the hair, he hid not his face from ſhame and ſpitting.*

II. But are we reading a prophecy, or the hiſtory of his extreme humiliation? It is a prophecy; how literally and exactly it was fulfilled, we learn from his hiſtory by the evangeliſts. With what cruelty, with what contempt was he treated, firſt by the ſervants in the hall of the High Prieſt, afterwards by the Roman ſoldiers! Let us conſider him, *who endured the contradiction of ſinners againſt himſelf* †. Theſe words of the apoſtle ſuggeſt ſome preliminary obſervations, to prepare our minds for receiving a due impreſſion, from the ſeveral particulars here mentioned.

* Rev. xii. 11. † Heb. xii. 3.

When the apoſtle would diſpoſe believers by an argument or motive (which, if we fully underſtood it, would render all other arguments unneceſſary) to endure ſufferings and croſſes patiently; he ſays, *Conſider him*—he uſes a word which is properly a mathematical term, denoting the ratio or proportion between different numbers, or figures, q. d. Compare yourſelves with him, and his ſufferings with your own. Conſider who he is, no leſs than what he endured.

In the apprehenſions of men, inſults are aggravated, in proportion to the diſparity between the perſon who receives, and who offers them. A blow, from an equal, is an offence, but would be ſtill more deeply reſented from an inferior. But if a ſubject, a ſervant, a ſlave, ſhould preſume to ſtrike a king, it would juſtly be deemed an enormous crime. But Jeſus the King of kings, and Lord of lords, whom all the angels of God worſhip, made himſelf ſo entirely of no reputation, that the baſeſt of the people, the ſervants, the common ſoldiers, were not afraid to make him the object of their deriſion, and to expreſs their hatred in the moſt ſarcaſtic and contemptuous manner. It is ſaid, that he en-

2 dured

dured the contradiction of *finners*. So, perhaps, do we; but we are finners likewife, and deferve much more than we fuffer, if not immediately from the inftruments of our grief, yet from the Lord, who has a right to employ what inftruments he pleafes, to afflict us for our fins. This thought quieted the fpirit of David, when his own fon rofe up againft his life, and his own fervant curfed him to his face *. But Jefus was holy, harmlefs, and undefiled, he had done nothing amifs; yet, the ufage he met with was fuch, as has feldom been offered to the vileft malefactor. Their cruel and fcornful contradiction was, likewife, expreflly and directly againft *himfelf*; whereas his people only fuffer from unreafonable and wicked men, for his fake, and for their profeffed attachment to *him*. In the moft violent perfecutions, they who could be prevailed on to renounce his name, and his caufe, ufually efcaped punifhment, and were frequently favoured and rewarded. And this is ftill the ground of the world's difpleafure; fierce and bitter as their oppofition may feem, the way to reconciliation is always open; they are not angry with us far-

* 2 Sam. xvi. 11.

ther

ther than we avow a dependance upon him, and ſhew ourſelves determined to obey him rather than men. If we could forſake him, their reſentment would be diſarmed, for they mean no more than to intimidate us from his ſervice. I do not think that they who make peace with the world upon theſe terms, are eſteemed by them for their compliance, but they are ſeldom diſturbed any longer. It is plain, therefore, that if we ſuffer as Chriſtians, it is for his ſake. He likewiſe ſuffered for our ſakes, but how wide is the difference between him and us! We, when the trial is ſharp, are in danger of flinching from the cauſe of our beſt friend and benefactor, to whom our obligations are ſo innumerable, and ſo immenſe; whereas he gave himſelf up to endure ſuch things for us, when we were ſtrangers and enemies! He was not only treated with cruelty, but with every mark of the utmoſt deteſtation and ſcorn, which wanton, unfeeling, unreſtrained barbarity could ſuggeſt.

1. They began to *ſpit upon him* in the High Prieſt's hall. The Roman ſoldiers likewiſe *did ſpit upon him*, when they had contemptuouſly arrayed him in a ſcarlet robe,

and bowed the knee before him, in mockery of his title of King. Great as an inſult of this kind would be deemed amongſt us, it was conſidered as ſtill greater, according to the cuſtoms prevalent in the eaſtern countries. There, to ſpit, even in the preſence of a perſon, though it were only upon the ground, conveyed the idea of diſdain and abhorrence. But the loweſt of the people ſpit *in the face* of the Son of God. No compariſon can fully illuſtrate this indignity. There is ſome proportion between the greateſt earthly Monarch, and the moſt abject ſlave. They did not ſpit upon Alexander, or Cæſar, but upon the Lord of glory.

2. They *buffeted and beat him on the face,* and when he meekly offered his cheeks to their blows, *they plucked off the hair.* The beard was in thoſe times accounted honourable; and when David's ſervants were ſhaven by the command of Hanun *, they were aſhamed to be ſeen. But Jeſus was not ſhaven. With ſavage violence they tore off the hair of his beard. While he like a ſheep before the ſhearers was dumb, and quietly yielded himſelf to their outrages.

* 2 Sam. x. 5.

3. *His*

3. *His back* they *tore with ſcourges*, as was foretold by the Pſalmiſt *. *The plowers plowed upon my back, they made long their furrows.* The Jewiſh council condemned him to death, for blaſphemy, becauſe he ſaid he was the Son of God. Stoning was the puniſhment preſcribed, by the law of Moſes, in ſuch caſes †. But this death was not ſufficiently lingering and tormenting to gratify their malice. To glut their inſatiable cruelty, they were therefore willing to own their ſubjection to the Roman power to be ſo abſolute, that it was not lawful for them to put any one to death ‡, according to their own judicial law; and thus wilfully, though unwittingly, they fulfilled the prophecies. They preferred the puniſhment which the Romans appropriated to ſlaves, who were guilty of flagitious crimes, and therefore inſiſted that he ſhould be crucified. According to the Roman cuſtom, thoſe who were crucified, were previouſly ſcourged. Thus when they had mocked him, and made him their ſport, by putting a crown of thorns on his head, and a reed in his hand for a ſceptre, in deriſion of his kingly office, he was ſtripped and ſcourged. It was not unfre-

* Pſal. cxxix. 3. † Lev. xxiv. 16. ‡ John xviii. 31.

quent for the ſufferers to expire under the ſeverity and torture of ſcourging. And we may be certain that Jeſus experienced no lenity from their mercileſs hands. The plowers plowed his back. But more and greater tortures were before him. He was engaged to make a full atonement for ſin, by his ſufferings; and as he had power over his own life, he would not diſmiſs his ſpirit, till he could ſay, *It is finiſhed.*

And now, to uſe the words of Pilate, *Behold the man*!* Oh! for a realizing impreſſion of this his extreme humiliation and ſuffering, that we may be duly affected with a ſenſe of his love to ſinners, and of the evil of our ſins, which rendered it neceſſary that the ſurety ſhould thus ſuffer! Behold *the Lamb of God*, mocked, blind-folded, ſpit upon, and ſcourged! Let us add to all this the conſideration of his praying for his tormentors †, and we have an example of perfect magnanimity.

Shall *we* then refuſe to ſuffer ſhame for *his* ſake, and be intimidated by the frowns or contempt of men, from avowing our attachment to him! Ah! Lord, we are, indeed,

* John xix. 5. † Luke xxiii. 34.

capable

capable of this baſeneſs and ingratitude. But, if thou art pleaſed to ſtrengthen us with the power of thy Spirit, we will account ſuch diſgrace our glory. Then we will not hang down our heads and deſpond, but will rather rejoice and be exceeding glad, if the world revile us and perſecute us, and ſpeak all manner of evil againſt us, provided it be falſely *, and provided it be for thy ſake!

Shall we continue in ſin †, after we know what it coſt him, to expiate our ſins! God forbid! When Mark Antony addreſſed the citizens of Rome, to animate them to revenge the death of Cæſar—he enlarged upon Cæſar's character, his great actions, his love to the Roman people, and the evidence he had given of it, in the donations and bequeſts he had appointed them by his will, the particulars of which he ſpecified. When he had thus engaged their admiration and gratitude, and they diſcovered emotions of regret and ſenſibility, that Cæſar, the greateſt character in Rome, who had fought and triumphed for *them*, and had remembered *them* in his will, ſhould be ſlain, Antony threw aſide a cloth, and ſhewed them his dead body, covered with wounds and

* Matt. v. 11. † Rom. vi. 1.

 blood.

blood. This fight rendered it needlefs to fay more. The whole affembly united as one man, to fearch out, and to deftroy his murderers. The application is obvious—May our hearts, from this hour, be filled with a determined, invariable refentment againft fin, the procuring caufe of the humiliation, and death, of our beft friend and benefactor!

SER-

SERMON XIX.

MESSIAH SUFFERING AND WOUNDED FOR US.

ISAIAH liii. 4, 5.

Surely he hath borne our grief and carried our ſorrows.—He was wounded for our tranſgreſſions, he was bruiſed for our iniquities; the chaſtiſement of our peace was upon him, and with his ſtripes we are healed.

WHEN our Lord was transfigured, Moſes and Elijah appeared in glory and converſed with him. Had we been informed of the interview only, we ſhould probably have deſired to know the ſubject of their converſation, as we might reaſonably ſuppoſe it turned upon very intereſting and important topics. The ſcripture makes little proviſion for the indulgence of our curioſity, but omits nothing that is neceſſary for our

inſtruction: and we learn thus much from it, that they diſcourſed, not upon the trifling things which the world accounts great, ſuch as the riſe and fall of empires; but they ſpake of the ſufferings of Jeſus, and of the deceaſe which he ſhould accompliſh at Jeruſalem. They ſpake of his Exodus * (as the word is) his departure out of life, the iſſue and completion of his engagement for ſinners, that is, his crucifixion and death. This is the grand theme of heaven and heaven-born ſouls. We lately conſidered the cruel inſults MESSIAH ſubmitted to, from the ſervants in the High Prieſt's hall, and from the Roman ſoldiers. The paſſage I have now read, leads our meditations to the foot of the croſs. May the Holy Spirit realize the ſcene to our hearts! The croſs of Chriſt diſplays the divine perfections with peculiar glory. Here the name of God is revealed, as a juſt God and a Saviour. Here the believer contemplates in one view, the unſpeakable evil of ſin, and the unſearchable riches of mercy. This gives him the moſt affecting ſenſe of the miſery which he has deſerved, while at the ſame time he receives the fulleſt aſſurance that there is for-

* Luke ix. 31.

giveneſs

givenefs with God, and difcovers a fure foundation whereon he may build his hope of eternal life, without fear of difappointment. From the moment the apoftle Paul was enlightened to underftand this myftery of redeeming love, he accounted his former gain but lofs; his former fuppofed wifdom, no better than folly, and became determined to know nothing *, to depend upon nothing, to glory in nothing, but Jefus Chrift, and him crucified.

A reprefentation of the Redeemer's fufferings, capable of exciting tears and moving the paffions, may be made by the powers of oratory; and fimilar emotions have often been produced by a romance or a tragedy, though the fubject is known, before-hand, to be entirely a fiction. But light in the underftanding, is neceffary to convince and influence the heart. Unlefs the mind be deeply penetrated with the *caufes*, which rendered MESSIAH's death neceffary, the moft pathetic defcription of the *fact*, will leave the will and affections unchanged. I hope many of my auditory can affign thefe caufes. You have felt yourfelves perfonally concerned in an

* 1 Cor. ii. 2. Gal. vi. 14.

event

event which took place long before your birth; and if you are asked, Why was Jesus mocked, buffeted, and spit upon? and why were his enemies permitted to nail him to the cross? You can answer, *Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows*—and you can likewise say, *By his stripes we are healed.*

The words lead us to consider the *cause*, and the *effect*.

I. The *cause* of the Redeemer's sufferings, implied in the word *our*. He bore the griefs and sorrows which were our desert. Such is the language, the confession, the grateful acknowledgment of all who believe in his name. They who are delivered by grace from the spirit and power of this evil world, and who live by his death; and, likewise they, who see they must perish, unless saved by him, are authorized to consider him as mindful of them, and making provision for them, in the day of his trouble. They who were actually healed by looking at the brasen serpent, according to God's appointment, had a sufficient proof in themselves, that it was erected, and placed in view of the camp*, on their account. *He bore our griefs.*—It does not

* Num. xxi. 9.

follow

follow that ſinners muſt have been crucified, if the Saviour had not been crucified on their behalf. But as this was a painful and terrible puniſhment, it may teach us, that without his interpoſition we were juſtly liable to extremity of miſery in the preſent life. That we who have offended God, ſhould enjoy health, peace, or ſatisfaction for a ſingle hour; that we do not draw every breath in the moſt excruciating pain; that we derive any comfort from creatures; that we are not a burden and a terror to ourſelves, and mutually to each other; that our ſtate while upon earth, is, in any reſpect, better than an image of hell, muſt wholly be aſcribed to him. A ſinner, as ſuch, is under the curſe of the law, and this curſe includes every ſpecies of miſery that can affect us either in mind, body, or eſtate. But *he* was appointed, from the beginning, to ſuſtain and exhauſt the curſe for us. And, therefore, the earth, though ſo long inhabited by wretches in a ſtate of bold rebellion againſt their Maker, is filled with the fruits and evidences of his long-ſuffering patience and mercy. Therefore he ſtill affords *us rain and fruitful ſeaſons* *, indulges

* Acts xiv. 17.

us with a variety of temporal bleſſings, and gives us power to take comfort in them. This conſideration greatly enhances the value of temporal good things to his people. They receive them as from his hand, as tokens of his love and pledges of his favour, ſanctified to their uſe by his blood and promiſe. Cheered by ſuch thoughts as theſe, his poor people often enjoy their plain fare with a pleaſure, of which, the expenſive and diſſipated ſenſualiſt has no conception. And how does it add to the reliſh of all earthly comforts, to think, while we are uſing them,

There's not a gift his hand beſtows,
But coſt his heart a groan!

So, likewiſe, the remembrance of what he bore for them alleviates the preſſure of all their ſufferings, and affords them a ground whereon they may rejoice, *yea glory in tribulation** *alſo*.

But his crucifixion, and the whole of his ſufferings from wicked men, cannot give us a juſt idea of what he endured for us. Grievous as they were, conſidered in themſelves,

* Rom. v. 3.

they

they were light if compared with the agonies of his ſoul. Theſe extorted the blood from his body *, before the hand of man touched him. And when he uttered his moſt dolorous cry upon the croſs, it was not for the anguiſh of his bodily wounds, but his ſoul felt, for a ſeaſon, a ſeparation from the preſence and comforts of God. Therefore he ſaid, *Why haſt thou forſaken me* †? It is true his holy nature was not capable of ſome part of the impenitent ſinner's portion. Remorſe of conſcience, the ſtings of the never-dying worm, and the horrors and rage of deſpair, could not touch him, who had no perſonal ſin, and whoſe love and faith were always perfect. But a ſword pierced his ſoul, and it pleaſed the Father, not only to permit him to be bruiſed by the cruelty of his enemies, but to bruiſe him himſelf ‡.

The ground of all this was laid in his voluntary ſubſtitution of himſelf, from before the foundation of the world, to obey and ſuffer in behalf of his people. This point will offer more directly from the paſſage we are next to conſider. At preſent, let us briefly notice the expreſſions before us.

* Luke xxiii. 44. † Matt. xxvii. 46. ‡ Iſai. liii. 10.

1. *He was wounded.* This word, which signifies *pierced* or *stabbed*, refers to his crucifixion. This punishment, being unknown to the Jews till they were brought under the Roman power, they had, therefore, no express name for, in their language. Yet it is plainly described by the psalmist, who, speaking, by the spirit of prophecy, in the person of MESSIAH, says, *They pierced my hands and my feet**. And it was typified under the law of Moses †, by the curse annexed, to hanging upon a tree, which was the nearest death to this; by the paschal lamb, which was roasted; and by the brasen serpent. It was a fit death for a sinner, painful and ignominious. How circumstantial were the prophecies, how apposite the types, how exactly was all fulfilled, and how wonderful was it that the Jews should be led to depart from their own customs and purposes, in order to their accomplishment, though they intended nothing less! But it was the determined counsel and appointment of God ‡, who overrules all the designs of men, and all that to us appears contingent, to the purposes of his own will and glory.

* Psal. xxii. 16. † Deut. xxi. 23. Gal. iii. 13. 1 Cor. v. 7. John iii. 14. ‡ Acts ii. 23.

2. He

2. *He was bruiſed.* If we diſtinguiſh wounded from bruiſed, the latter may be referred to the ſorrows of his ſoul, (for it is expreſsly ſaid, *It pleaſed the Lord to bruiſe him*) that diſtreſs broke his heart, filled him with diſmay, cauſed him to be ſore amazed and very heavy, and to ſay to his diſciples, *My ſoul is exceedingly ſorrowful even unto death* *. No words can be more ſelected and emphatical, than thoſe which the evangeliſts uſe, in deſcribing his conſternation in the garden of Gethſemane. How can this his dejection and terror be accounted for, by thoſe, who deny that his ſufferings and death were a proper atonement of ſin; and who ſuppoſe, that when he had given to men a perfect rule of life, and commended it to them by his own example, he died, merely to confirm the truth of his doctrine, and to encourage his followers to faithfulneſs under ſufferings! Many of his followers, who were thus witneſſes for the truth, and patterns of faithfulneſs to us, have met death in its moſt terrible forms with compoſure, yea, with pleaſure, yea, with tranſports of joy. But is the diſciple above

* Matt. xxvi. 38.

his

his Lord? If Chriſtians have triumphed in ſuch circumſtances, why did Chriſt tremble? Not ſurely becauſe their courage and conſtancy were greater than his. The cauſes were intirely different. The martyrs were given up to them who only could kill the body, but Jeſus ſuffered immediately from the hand of God. One ſtroke of his mighty hand can bruiſe the ſpirit of man, more ſenſibly than the united power of all creatures. Jeſus died. They that believe in him, are ſaid *to ſleep in him* *. To them death comes diſarmed of its ſting, wearing a friendly aſpect, and bringing a welcome meſſage of diſmiſſion from every evil. But the death of Jeſus was death indeed, death in all its horrors, the death which ſinners had deſerved to ſuffer as tranſgreſſors of the law.

3. The *chaſtiſement*, or, the *puniſhment* of our *peace, was upon him.* That chaſtiſement, or puniſhment, on the account of which, ſinners obtain peace with God. It properly ſignifies here, a puniſhment for inſtruction or example. Puniſhments are inflicted, either for the correction of an offender, or for the prevention of evil, or for example to others.

* 1 Theſſ. iv. 14.

The

The two former reaſons could not apply to our Lord. He had committed no evil, he was perfect before, and in ſuffering. But ſtanding in the place of ſinners, and engaged to expiate their offences, he was made a public example of the miſery and diſtreſs which ſin demerited. Thus juſtice was vindicated in the exerciſe of mercy, and ſinners believing in his name, are exempted from puniſhment, for his ſake, in a way which affords not the leaſt encouragement or extenuation to ſin. And thus our peace is procured.

II. The effect of his ſufferings for ſins not his own. *He bore our griefs and carried our ſorrows*; he was wounded and bruiſed for us, *the chaſtiſement of our peace was upon him*, that *by his ſtripes we may be healed*. The Hebrew word here, and the Greek word, the apoſtle Peter uſes in his quotation of this paſſage, which we render *ſtripes* *, is, properly, the mark, which ſtripes or wounds leave upon the body, or, as we ſay, *ſcars*. The ſcars in his hands, feet, and ſide, and, perhaps, other marks of his many wounds, remained after his reſurrection. And John ſaw him in viſion, before the throne, as a lamb that had

* 1 Pet. iii. 24.

been ſlain. All theſe expreſſions and repreſentations, I apprehend, are deſigned to intimate to us, that though the death of MESSIAH is an event long ſince paſt, yet the effects and benefits are ever new, and, to the eye of faith are ever preſent. How admirable is this expedient, that the wounds of one, yea, of millions, ſhould be healed, by beholding the wounds of another! Yet this is the language of the goſpel, Look and live. *Look unto me and be ye ſaved.* Three great wounds are ours, guilt, ſin, and ſorrow; but by contemplating his weals or ſcars with an enlightened eye, and by rightly underſtanding, who was thus wounded, and why; all theſe wounds are healed.

You who live by this medicine, ſpeak well of it. Tell to others, as you have opportunity, what a Saviour you have found. It is uſual for thoſe who have been relieved, in dangerous and complicated diſeaſes, by a ſkilful phyſician, to commend him to others who are labouring under the like maladies. We often ſee public acknowledgments to this purpoſe. If all the perſons, who have felt the efficacy of a dying Saviour's wounds apprehended by faith, were to publiſh their caſes, how greatly

would his power and grace be difplayed! They are all upon record, and will all be known in the great day of his appearing. Some of them are occafionally publifhed, and may be read in our own tongue. And though they are not all related with equal judgment, nor attended with circumftances equally ftriking, yet there is a fufficiency, in this way, to leave the world without excufe. Not to mention modern accounts of this kind, (though many might be mentioned which are indifputably true, and fuperior to the cavils of gainfayers) the Confeffions of Auftin may be appealed to, as a proof that the gofpel is not a fyftem of notions only, but has a mighty power to enlighten the bewildered mind, to fubdue the obftinate will, to weaken the force of long-confirmed habits of evil, to relieve from diftreffing fears, and to effect a real, univerfal, permanent, and beneficial change of fentiment and conduct, fuch as no fimilar inftance can be found, in the hiftory of mankind, to have been produced by any other principles. But if you are a true Chriftian, in the circle of your connections, you will, fometimes, have a fair opportunity of giving a reafon of the hope that is in you. Pray for grace and

wiſdom to improve ſuch ſeaſons; and if you ſpeak the truth in ſimplicity and love, you know not but the Lord may give his bleſſing to your teſtimony, and honour you as an inſtrument of good. And to convert one ſinner from the error of his way, is an event of greater importance, than the deliverance of a whole kingdom from temporal evil.

Yet, remember, if you eſpouſe this cauſe, a certain conſiſtency of character will be expected from you, without which, you had better be ſilent, than ſpeak in its defence, or profeſs yourſelf a ſharer in the privileges of the goſpel. There are too many perſons who treat the great truths, we profeſs, as mere opinions, points of ſpeculation, which form the ſhibboleth of a party. There are others, who think an attachment to them, the ſure ſign of an enthuſiaſtic, deluded imagination. And there are others, again, who miſrepreſent them as unfavourable to morality, and affording a cloke and an encouragement to licentiouſneſs. Beware, leſt, by an improper conduct, you lay ſtumbling-blocks in the way of the blind, ſtrengthen the prejudices of the ignorant, and give weight to the

calum-

calumnies of the malicious. The people of the world are quick-ſighted to the faults of religious profeſſors, and though they affect to deſpiſe their principles, they are tolerable judges what that converſation is, which only theſe principles can produce, and always expect it from thoſe who avow them. They will make allowances for others, and admit human infirmity as a plea for their faults, but they will not extend their candour to you. If your zeal for the truth, and your regular attendance upon the miniſters who preach it, are not accompanied with a ſpirit of humility, integrity, and benevolence; if you are paſſionate, peeviſh, diſcontented, cenſorious, or proud; if they obſerve that you are greedy of gain, penurious, cloſe-fiſted, or hard-hearted; or even if you comply with their cuſtoms and ſpirit, mingle with them in their amuſements, and do not maintain a noble ſingularity by avoiding every appearance of evil; they will not only deſpiſe *you* in their hearts, but they will take the occaſion of deſpiſing and ſpeaking evil of the truth itſelf, on your account. But if you are all of a piece, and are truly ſolicitous to adorn your profeſſion, by walking agreeable

to the rules of the gospel, and filling up your relations in life to the glory of God, and the good of your fellow-creatures; by thus *well-doing, you will put to ſilence the ignorance of fooliſh men* *, and in a great meaſure, ſtop their mouths, if you cannot change their hearts. And though they may affect to rail at you, or to ridicule you, they will be conſtrained to feel a ſecret reverence for you in their conſciences.

But are there any hearts of ſtone amongſt us, who are ſtill unaffected by the love and ſufferings of the Son of God; who are ſtill crucifying him afreſh, and living in ſin, though they hear and know what it coſt him to make an atonement for ſin? Yet now hear—now look—Behold the Lamb of God! The Lord in mercy open the eyes of your mind. I addreſs you once more. I once more conjure you by his agony and bloody ſweat, by his paſſion, croſs, and death, to ſeek to him that your ſouls may live. Can you be proof againſt theſe arguments? Nay, then, ſhould you live and die thus obſtinate, you muſt periſh indeed!

* 1 Pet. ii. 15.

SER-

SERMON XX.

SIN CHARGED UPON THE SURETY.

ISAIAH liii. 6.

All we like ſheep have gone aſtray: we have turned every one to his own way, and the Lord hath laid upon him the iniquity of us all.

COMPARISONS, in the ſcripture, are frequently to be underſtood with great limitation: perhaps, out of many circumſtances, one only is juſtly applicable to the caſe. Thus, when our Lord ſays, *Behold, I come as a thief* *—common ſenſe will fix the reſemblance to a ſingle point, that he will come ſuddenly, and unexpected. So when wandering ſinners are compared to wandering ſheep, we have a ſtriking image of the danger of their ſtate, and of their inability to recover themſelves. Sheep, wandering without a ſhepherd, are expoſed, a defenceleſs and eaſy

* Rev. xvi. 15.

prey, to wild beaſts and enemies, and liable to periſh for want of paſture; for they are not able either to provide for themſelves, or to find the way back to the place from whence they ſtrayed. Whatever they ſuffer, they continue to wander, and if not ſought out, will be loſt. Thus far the alluſion holds. But ſheep, in ſuch a ſituation, are not the ſubjects of blame. They would be highly blameable, if we could ſuppoſe them rational creatures; if they had been under the eye of a careful and provident ſhepherd, had been capable of knowing him, had wilfully and obſtinately renounced his protection and guidance, and voluntarily choſen to plunge themſelves into danger, rather than to remain with him any longer. Thus it is with man. His wandering is rebellious. God made him *upright*, but he has *ſought out* to himſelf *many inventions* *. God has appointed for mankind a ſafe and pleaſant path, by walking in which, they ſhall find reſt to their ſouls; but they ſay, *We will not walk therein* †. They were capable of knowing the conſequences of going aſtray, were repeatedly warned of them, were fenced in by wiſe and good laws, which

* Eccleſ. vii. 29.

† Jer. vi. 16.

they

they preſumptuouſly broke through. And when they had wandered from him, they were, again and again, invited to return to him, but they refuſed. They mocked his meſſages and his meſſengers, and preferred the miſery they had brought upon themſelves, to the happineſs of being under his direction and care. Surely he emphatically deſerves the name of the Good Shepherd, who freely laid down his life, to reſtore ſheep of this character!

My text, therefore, expreſſes the ſentiment of thoſe, and of thoſe only, who are acquainted with the miſery of our fallen ſtate, feel their own concern in it, and approve of the method which God has provided for their deliverance and recovery. It contains a confeſſion of their own guilt, and an acknowledgment of his mercy.

I. *A confeſſion of guilt and wretchedneſs.* Sin has deprived us both of the knowledge and preſence of God. In conſequence of this, we wander, every one to his own way. All are under the power of ſin, and all equally ſtrangers to the paths of peace and ſafety. The paths which ſinners chuſe for themſelves are diverſe from each other, as inclination or cir-

circumſtances vary; but however different in appearance, if perſiſted in, they terminate at laſt in the ſame point. They all lead to deſtruction. We may obſerve on this head,

1. It is a ſufficient proof of our depravity, that we prefer our own ways to the Lord's; nor can he inflict a heavier judgment upon us, in this life, than to give us up entirely to the way of our own hearts. He made us to be happy, but as he made us for himſelf, and gave us a capacity, and a vaſtneſs of deſire, which only he himſelf can ſatisfy, the very conſtitution and frame of our nature render happineſs impoſſible to us, unleſs in a way of dependance upon him, and obedience to his laws. The lamb that grazes in the meadow, and the fiſh that ſwims in the ſtream, are each in their proper element. If you ſuppoſe them to change places, they muſt both periſh. But the brute creation have no propenſity to ſuch changes as would deſtroy them. The inſtincts, implanted in them by their great Creator, are conducive to their welfare; and to theſe inſtincts they are uniformly faithful. If you can conceive of beaſts impatient to leave the ſhore, and improve their ſituation by ruſhing into the ocean; and the fiſhes equally earneſt

earneſt to forſake the waters, in queſt of new and greater advantages upon the dry land, it may illuſtrate the folly of fallen man, who turned aſide by a deceived heart, refuſes life, and ſeeks death in the error of his ways. For the will of God (if I may ſo ſpeak) is our proper element; and if we depart from it, our ſin unavoidably involves our puniſhment. We naturally indulge hard thoughts of God, and think the rule he has enjoined us, too ſtrict and ſevere, intended to reſtrain us from real good, and propoſe, to ourſelves, ſome unknown advantages, by tranſgreſſing it. Thus Satan perſuaded Eve, and we derive from her. And though we know that ſhe only gained miſery by the experiment, we raſhly repeat it for ourſelves. The ſcripture aſſures us, that the ways of God are pleaſant, but we will not be perſuaded. Experience proves that the way of tranſgreſſors is hard, but we reſiſt the conviction, and hurry on in a round of continual diſappointment. Are the proud, the covetous, the voluptuous, or the ambitious, happy? I appeal to conſcience.

2. There is only one right way, but a thouſand ways, of being wrong. If you are not following him, who has ſaid, *I am the*

way

way, the truth, and the life *, you are wandering, you are far from God; for none can come to the Father but by him: and far from peace, for there can be no true peace in the mind, unleſs he beſtows and maintains it. The profane and the ſelf-righteous, the open ſinner and the hypocrite, the lover of pleaſure and the lover of gold, the formal papiſt and the formal proteſtant, though they ſeem to travel different roads, though they pity or cenſure each other, will meet at laſt, (unleſs the grace of God prevent) in the ſame ſtate of final and hopeleſs miſery. It is grievous to a ſpiritual and benevolent mind, to ſee thoſe who are all wrong, diſputing among themſelves, which of them is right. Each one is ready to think himſelf wiſe, if the folly, in which he allows himſelf, be not preciſely of the ſame kind with that which he condemns in his neighbour. But the ſcripture is the invariable rule, to which it is your duty and intereſt to be conformed now; for it is given by the inſpiration and authority of God, and is the ſtandard, by which you muſt be judged at laſt. Whatever character you bear amongſt men, if you have not faith and holi-

* John xiv. 6.

neſs,

neſs, you certainly are not in the way of life. For it is written, *He that believeth not ſhall be damned* *; and again, it is written, *Without holineſs, no man ſhall ſee the Lord* †.

3. As wandering ſheep are liable to innumerable dangers, which, they can neither foreſee nor prevent, ſuch is our condition, until, by the power of the Holy Spirit, we are ſtopped, and turned, and brought into the fold of the good Shepherd. Oh! the miſery of man while living without God in the world! He is expoſed every hour to the ſtroke of death, which would at once ſeparate him from all that he loves, and plunge him into the pit, from whence there is no redemption. And at preſent, he is perpetually harraſſed with cares and fears, with wants and woes, without guidance or refuge; and yet ſo blinded as to think himſelf ſafe, and that his crooked, wandering ways, will lead him to happineſs!

II. *An acknowledgment of mercy.* Where ſin abounded, grace has much more abounded. Man ſinned, and MESSIAH ſuffered. *The Lord hath laid,* or cauſed to meet upon him *the iniquity of us all,* that is, the puniſhment due to them. The evils we had de-

* Mark xvi. 16. † Heb. xii. 14.

ſerved,

ſerved, were in purſuit of us; but Jeſus interpoſed, and they all ſeized upon him, and he endured them, that we might be ſpared. Do we aſk upon what grounds? It was on the ground of his voluntary ſubſtitution for ſinners, as their covenant head and repreſentative.

So much correſpondent to this appointment obtains amongſt men, as may ſhew that the idea accords with our notion of juſtice. If a man be unable to pay a debt, and the creditor ſhould exact the payment from a third perſon who was no way concerned, it would, with reaſon, be deemed a very oppreſſive action. But if it be known that this perſon became freely bound and reſponſible, for the debtor, he is allowed to be juſtly liable. But in the preſent caſe, I make no appeal to human cuſtoms. It is a divine appointment, and, therefore, is, and muſt be right. It was a great deſign, the triumph of infinite wiſdom, the higheſt effect of the love of God. It is revealed, not to be ſubmitted to our diſcuſſion, or that we may ſit in judgment upon the propriety of the meaſure, but it demands our higheſt admiration and praiſe; and, like the ſun, brings with it that

that light, by which the whole ſyſtem of our knowledge is illuminated. For till we know this great truth, and are able to ſee its influence upon every thing we are related to, whatever attainments we may boaſt, we are, in fact, encompaſſed with thick darkneſs, with darkneſs which may be felt. For the accompliſhment of this deſign, the Son of God was ſo manifeſted in the nature of man, that he, and they who believe in him, participate in a real, though myſtical union, and are conſidered as one. He their living head. They his body, conſiſting of many members; each of them repreſented by him, accepted in him, and deriving from his fulneſs, their life, their light, their ſtrength, and their joy.

1. He was thus appointed and conſtituted before the world began; according to the holy counſel and covenant ſettled from everlaſting * for the redemption of ſinners. For the fall of man, which rendered his interpoſition neceſſary, was not an unexpected contingency, but was foreſeen and provided for, before man was created upon the earth, yea, before the foundations of the earth were laid.

* Prov. viii. 31. Tit. i. 2.

2. After

2. After man had finned, this glorious head and furety made known the certainty and benefit of his mediation, and engagement, on the behalf of finners, according to the good pleafure of his wifdom, and as the cafe required. Otherwife, upon the entrance of fin, the full execution of the fentence of the law, denounced againft the offenders, might, perhaps, have immediately followed. But he revealed himfelf. He fhewed mercy to Adam, covenanted with Noah, walked with Abraham, converfed with Mofes, dwelt with his church in the wildernefs, and was known by the name of the *Holy One of Ifrael* *. David afcribes to the Shepherd of Ifrael, the name of Jehovah; and Ifaiah declares, that the Lord of Hofts is the Hufband of the church. Thefe characters of Shepherd, and Bridegroom, and Hufband, are appropriated to MESSIAH in the New Teftament. He therefore is Jehovah, the Lord of Hofts, whom Abraham, David, and Ifaiah, worfhipped, or his appearance upon earth would be evidently to the difadvantage of thofe who believe in him. If he were not God, he would be a creature, for there is no medium.

* Ifai. liv. 5. Pfal. xxiii. 1.

And consequently our Shepherd would be infinitely inferior, to that almighty Shepherd, who was the refuge, the trust, and the salvation of his people, before MESSIAH was manifested in the flesh.

3. In the fulness of time, he veiled his glory. He *who was in the form of God, and thought it no robbery to be equal with God, took upon him the form of a servant, and was made of a woman, made under the law* *. Then the union between him, and the people whom he came into the world to save, was compleated. Because *the children were partakers of flesh and blood, he likewise took part of the same* †. The *Word, who in the beginning was God, and was with God, was made flesh* ‡. And in our nature, though he knew no sin, he was treated as a sinner for us, to declare the righteousness of God, in his forbearance and goodness to all who had been saved in former ages, and in the forgiveness and salvation of all who should trust in him to the end of time. He suffered *once*, once for all, *the just for the unjust, to bring us to God.* And now God is revealed, not only as merciful, but as just, *in justifying him which believeth in Jesus.* God is well-

* Phil. ii. 6, 7. † Heb. ii. 14. ‡ John i. 1.

pleased in him, and for his sake, with all who accept him. Their sins are expiated by his sufferings *, and his perfect righteousness, the whole of his obedience unto death, is the consideration or ground, on which they are accounted righteous.

By virtue of this union, likewise, he is their life. They receive of his fulness, as the branches † derive their life and fruitfulness from the tree whereon they grow; therefore the apostle said, *I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me* ‡. This is the great mystery of Christianity, which words alone cannot explain; it is a divine appointment, hidden from those who are wise and prudent in their own sight, but revealed to all, who, with the simplicity of children, are desirous of being taught of God, and wait patiently upon him, in the use of his prescribed means, for the light and and influence of his Holy Spirit.

From this subject, the substitution of MESSIAH for sinners, we may learn,

1. How to estimate the evil of sin. That sin is a great evil, is evident by its effects. It deprived Adam of the life and presence of God, and brought death, and all natural evil

* Rom. iv. 6. Jer. xxiii. 6. † John xv. 1. ‡ Gal. ii. 20.

into the world. It caused the destruction of the old world by water. It is the source of all the misery with which the earth is now filled, it will kindle the last great conflagration; yea, it has, already kindled that fire, which shall never be quenched. But in no view does the sinfulness of sin appear so striking, as in this wonderful effect—the suffering and death of MESSIAH. That notwithstanding the dignity of his person, and the perfection of his obedience to the law, and that though he prayed in his agonies, *that if it were possible the cup might pass from him* *, yet, if sinners were to be saved, it was indispensably necessary that he should drink it. This shews the evil of sin in the strongest light. And in this light it is viewed by all who derive life from his death, and healing from his wounds. We may be afraid of the consequences of sin, from other considerations; but it is only by looking to him who was pierced † for our transgressions, that we can learn to hate it.

2. The complete justification of those who believe in him. They are ‡ delivered from all condemnation. Every charge against them

* Luke xxiii. 42. † Zech. xii. 10. ‡ Rom. viii. 1.

is overruled by this plea, *that Chriſt has died, and is riſen* on their behalf, *and ever liveth to make interceſſion for them*. And though they are ſtill in a ſtate of diſcipline, for the mortification of ſin yet remaining in them; and though for the trial, exerciſe, and growth of their faith, it is ſtill needful that they paſs through many tribulations, yet none of theſe are ſtrictly and properly penal. They are not the tokens of God's diſpleaſure, but fatherly chaſtiſements, and tokens of his love, deſigned to promote the work of grace in their hearts, and to make them partakers of his holineſs *. Though neceſſary at preſent, they will not be neceſſary long; and, therefore, the hour is at hand when all tears ſhall be wiped away from their eyes, and they ſhall weep no more. His true ſervants, in the midſt of the ſtorms by which they are toſſed on the tempeſtuous ſea of this life, are no leſs ſafe, and, notwithſtanding their imperfections, are no leſs beloved, than thoſe who have already eſcaped out of the reach of every evil, and are now before the throne.

3. The reaſon why believers are not wearied, nor overpowered, by all the difficulties of

* Heb. xii. 6—11.

their

their ſervice, nor by all the arts and efforts of their enemies. They are one with Chriſt. He who has all power in heaven and in earth, is engaged for their ſupport. When they faint he revives them; when they are wounded he heals them; when their foot ſlippeth he upholdeth them. He has ſaid, *becauſe I live, ye ſhall live alſo.* Therefore who can prevail againſt them, when their *life is hidden with Chriſt in God**? And farther, the knowledge of their Saviour's love, and of the holy, awful, yet amiable and endearing character of God diſplayed in his mediation, is the ſource of their love, gratitude, and cheerful obedience. It is this makes hard things eaſy, and bitter things ſweet. The *love of Chriſt conſtraineth them* †. They look to him and are enlightened. And when they conſider who he is, in what way, and at what a price he redeemed them, and what he has prepared for them; when they attend to his gracious word, *Fear none of theſe things, thou ſhalt ſuffer; be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life* ‡: they, out of weakneſs, are made ſtrong; they are inſpired with freſh courage; they take up their

* Col. iii. 3. † 2 Cor. v. 14. ‡ Rev. ii. 10.

cross with cheerfulness, and can adopt the language of the apostle, *None of these things move me, neither count I my life dear, so that I may finish my course with joy* *.

* Acts xx. 24.

SER-

SERMON XXI.

MESSIAH DERIDED UPON THE CROSS.

PSAL. xxii. 7, 8.

All they that see me, laugh me to scorn; they shout out the lip, they shake the head, saying, He trusted in the Lord that he would deliver him; let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him.

FALLEN man, though alienated from the life of God, and degraded with respect to many of his propensities and pursuits, to a level with the beasts that perish, is not wholly destitute of kind and compassionate feelings towards his fellow-creatures. While self-interest does not interfere, and the bitter passions of envy, hatred, malice, and revenge, are not roused into exercise, he has a degree of instinctive sympathy with them in their

ſufferings, and a diſpoſition to aſſiſt them, if he can do it without much detriment to himſelf. The ſource of theſe ſocial feelings, we expreſs, by the term *humanity*; which ſeems to imply a conſciouſneſs that they properly belong to our nature, and that we *ought*, at leaſt, to be always, and univerſally affected in this manner, when occaſions offer. But while the heart is under the government of ſelf, our humanity is very partial and limited. And it is to be aſcribed to the goodneſs of God, rather than to any real goodneſs in man, that it is not wholly extinguiſhed. Were this the caſe, and were the native evils of the heart left to exert themſelves in their full ſtrength, and without controul, earth would be the very image of hell, and there could be no ſuch thing as ſociety. But to prevent things from running into utter confuſion, God mercifully preſerves in mankind, ſome ſocial diſpoſitions. They are, however, ſo weak in themſelves, ſo powerfully counteracted by the ſtronger principles of our depravity, and ſo frequently ſuppreſſed by obſtinate habits of wickedneſs; that in the preſent ſtate of things, we may almoſt as juſtly define man, (whatever impropriety there

there may ſeem in the expreſſion) by ſaying, *He is an inhuman creature*, as by aſcribing to him the benevolent properties of *humanity*.

The rage, cruelty, and ſavage inſenſibility, with which ſin and ſatan have poiſoned our nature, never appear in ſo ſtrong a light, as when they aſſume a religious form; when ignorance, bigotry, and blind zeal, oppoſe the will and grace of God, under a pretence of doing him ſervice. By this infatuation, every hateful paſſion is ſanctified, and every feeling of humanity ſtifled. Thus, though the ſufferings of the moſt atrocious malefactors, uſually excite pity in the ſpectators, and often draw tears from their eyes; yet, the agonies of God's perſecuted ſervants, under the moſt exquiſite tortures which malice could invent, have frequently raiſed no other emotions, than thoſe of deriſion and ſcorn. My text leads us to conſider the higheſt inſtance of this kind. The xxiid Pſalm, undoubtedly, refers to MESSIAH. It begins with the very words which he uttered upon the croſs; nor could David ſpeak of himſelf, when he ſaid, *They pierced my hands and my feet*. *He* was God's ſervant in the moſt eminent ſenſe, and the ſervice he performed, was an uninterrupted courſe

course of benevolence, to the souls and bodies of men. He spent his life in *going about doing good* *; nor could his enemies fix a single stain upon his conduct. Yet they thirsted for his blood; and, because he came into the world to save sinners, they accomplished their cruel designs. We have already seen how he was treated by the servants and by the soldiers, when condemned by the Jewish council, and by the Roman governor. This prophecy was fulfilled when he hung upon the cross. There have been persons in our own days, whose crimes have excited such detestation, that the populace would probably have torn them in pieces, before, and even after their trial, if they could have had them in their power.—Yet when these very obnoxious persons have been executed, according to their sentence, if, perhaps, there was not one spectator who wished them to escape, yet neither was one found, so lost to sensibility, as to insult them in their dying moments. But when Jesus suffers, *all that see him, laugh him to scorn; they shoot out the lip, they shake the head*; they insult his character, and his hope. The evangelists furnish us with an affecting

* Acts x, 38.

comment upon this paſſage. They inform us, by whom he was thus ſcorned and derided —they mention ſome circumſtances, which ſtrongly mark the peculiar and exceſſive contempt, with which he was treated; and they take notice of the eſpecial ſcope and object of their inſults, namely, the gracious purpoſe he had often expreſſed towards ſinners, and the ſtrong confidence he had avowed in God his Father.

I. The *perſons* who ſcorned and derided him, were various, and of different characters.

1. *The chief prieſts, elders, and rulers of the people.* When theſe who were held in ignorant admiration, by the multitude, ſet the example, we do not wonder that it was generally followed. They had been his moſt avowed and determined enemies, they had long conſpired to take away his life, and in the appointed hour their plots were permitted to ſucceed. They now rejoiced in their ſucceſs. By their office as teachers and expounders of the law, they ought to have pointed him out to the people as the object of their reverence and hope; but having rejected him themſelves, they employed all their authority and influ-

influence to make him the object of general contempt. And left the extremity of his torments, should awaken sentiments of commiseration in the multitude, they were the first, and the loudest, in reviling him, as he hung upon the cross.

2. *The populace derided him.* They had been instigated by the priests to demand his death of Pilate, when he was desirous of dismissing him, and, rather, to insist that Barabbas should be spared *. The populace, though no less ignorant, were less malicious, than their leaders. At different times, when they heard his public discourses, and saw his wonderful works, they had been staggered and constrained to say, *Is not this the Son of David?* and not many days before, the popular cry had been strongly in his favour †; though quickly after, it was, *Crucify him, crucify him* ‡. As the sea, though sometimes smooth, is always disposed to obey the impulse of the wind, so the common people, though easily roused to oppose the truth, would, perhaps, be quiet, if they were left to themselves; but there are seldom wanting artful and designing men, who by a pretended regard for religion,

* Matt.xxvii.20. † Matt.xxi.10,11. ‡ Luke xxiii.21.

and

and by misrepresentations, work upon their passions and prejudices, and stir them up to a compliance with their purposes. The priests by degrees, wrought the populace up, first to reject MESSIAH, and then, to join their leaders, in mocking and deriding him.

3. *The Roman soldiers*, who had contemptuously clothed him with a scarlet robe, and bowed the knee before him, in derision, continued to mock him when hanging upon the cross. The Romans, to whom many monarchies were become subject and tributary, affected to despise the name of king. And they held the Jewish nation in peculiar contempt. The title, therefore, of king of the Jews, affixed to his cross, afforded them a subject for the keenest sarcasm.

4. Yea, such is the hardness of the human heart, *that one of the malefactors* *, who was crucified by his side, unaffected with his own guilt, and insensible of the just judgment of God, and of the account he was soon to render at his awful tribunal, seemed to seek some relief in the midst of his agonies, by joining with the priests and people, in railing on the innocent Jesus, who was suffering be-

* Luke xxiii. 39.

fore

fore his eyes. Thus he was the object of universal derision. They who were at the greatest distance in character and sentiment, who differed from, despised and hated each other, on other accounts, united as one man, in expressing every possible mark of hatred and scorn against him, who had done nothing amiss.

II. They shewed their scorn in the most pointed and cruel manner. Not only they, who had clamoured for his death, derided him, but others, who were only passing by upon their ordinary occasions, could not pass on till they had stopped a while to insult him, wagging their heads, and reminding him of what he had formerly said, and charging him with the supposed folly and arrogance of his claims. They jested upon his wants; when he said, *I thirst*, they gave him vinegar to drink, mingled with gall. They jested upon his words; when he uttered his dolorous complaint, *Eli, Eli, lama sabacthani*, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* some of them, with a malicious turn, (which possibly was applauded for wit by others) from the sound of the beginning of the sentence, took occasion to suggest, that by saying *Eli, Eli*, he

he called for Elias, the prophet, to come to his affiftance. Alas! of what dreadful malignity and obduracy is the heart of man capable? How may we conceive the heavenly hoft to have been affected with this fcene, when they beheld their Lord, the object of their worfhip and fupreme love, thus treated by finners? *But it behoved him thus to fuffer* *, for he had undertaken to expiate the fins of many of his murderers, and to offer fuch fatisfaction to the juftice and law of God, as might render it confiftent with his holinefs and truth, to pardon the vileft offenders, who fhould truft in his name, in all future ages. Therefore there was no voice, arreft, or interpofition from the heavenly world—thus he muft be tormented, thus he muft be fcorned, and fufpended as a fpectacle to angels and to men, till he had paid the full price of redemption, and could fay, *It is finifhed.* Then, and not till then, he bowed his head, and breathed out his fpirit into his Father's hands. There were, however, atteftations to his dignity, in this his loweft ftate. He fhewed, by his gracious anfwer to the penitent malefactor, that he had ftill authority upon earth to forgive

* Luke xxiv. 26.

fin,

sin, and to save to the uttermost. And the sun withdrew his light, and the rocks rent, though daring sinners derided and mocked.

III. The bulk of the people bore their part in this tragedy, through precipitation and ignorance. In his prayer for their forgiveness (a prayer which was signally answered after his ascension) he mentioned the only extenuation their wickedness could possibly admit, *They knew not what they did*. It was otherwise, with those, who were principally concerned in procuring his death. Long before, when they could not deny the reality of his miracles, they ascribed them to the agency of Beelzebub. By this malicious, wilful opposition, to the strongest evidence of fact, against the conviction of their own minds, and by their violent, determined rejection of his mission, they committed the unpardonable sin. They spoke and sinned against the Holy Spirit. This sin no one can have committed, while he is fearful lest he has committed it, for it essentially consists, in a deliberate and wilful refusal of the only means of salvation. It is the sign of final absolute impenitence. They who had thus ascribed his miracles to Beelzebub, expressed the same height of enlightened

lightened malice againſt him in his dying agonies, and there was a poignancy in their inſults, of which the ignorant multitude were not capable.

1. They reproached his great deſign for which he came into the world. *He ſaved others, himſelf he cannot ſave* *. How different is the force of the ſame words, according to the intention of the ſpeaker! When they ſaid, *His blood be upon us and upon our children* †! they ſpoke the very language of the hearts of thoſe who love him, and who derive all their hopes, and all their happineſs, from the application of his blood to their conſciences. But, to themſelves, it proved the moſt dreadful imprecation. So, it will be the grateful acknowledgment of his people in time, and to eternity, that when he was reſolved to ſave *them*, the difficulties in the way were ſo great, that neither his prayers, nor his tears, nor his unſpotted innocence, could prevail to ſave *himſelf*. But, for this his love to ſinners, his enemies reviled him. Nor would they have offered to believe, if he would come down from the croſs, had they ſuppoſed there was the leaſt probability of ſuch an event; for they

* Matt. xxvii. 42. † Ver. 25.

had often rejected evidence, equal to what they now demanded.

2. They reproached him for his trust and confidence in God. He had said, that *God was his own Father* *. And they understood him to use the expression in so high a sense, as thereby, to make himself equal with God. Had they misunderstood him; had he not really intended what they laid to his charge, surely he would have explained himself. This was the very ground of their proceeding against him, before the council, and the formal reason of the sentence of death, they pronounced against him. How often did he appeal to the testimony of the scriptures, and [illegible] whom they durst not but acknowledge [illegible] prophet, and to his own [illegible] works in support of his claim? But [illegible] derided him upon the cross, they [illegible] and unwittingly expressed their [illegible] in the very words, which, David [illegible] should be used to MESSIAH. So [illegible] were the scriptures fulfilled, by those, [illegible] used their utmost endeavours to evade them, and to prevent their accomplishment.

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* John v. 18. [illegible]

But

But what is all this to us? It is very much to us. Chriſt could ſuffer but once, yet we read of thoſe *who crucify him afreſh*. His goſpel repreſents his perſonal miniſtry, declares his character, reveals his love, produces the ſame effects in thoſe who receive it, and they who oppoſe it, are conſidered as oppoſing him, and are influenced, by the ſame ſpirit, which, inſtigated the unbelieving Jews. It is to be hoped that many reject and ſcorn it, as the multitude did of old, through ignorance; and that the interceſſion of him, who prayed for thoſe that knew not what they did, will prevail for their converſion. Whenever their eyes are opened, *they will be pricked to the heart* *, and will then gladly enquire of thoſe, whom now they deſpiſe, What they muſt do to be ſaved? But it is to be feared, there are, in Chriſtian countries, many perſons, who too nearly reſemble the ſpirit and conduct of the Jewiſh rulers. Whoſe oppoſition proceeds from rooted enmity to the truth, perſiſted in, againſt light that has ſometimes forced upon their minds, and who, though convinced, will not be perſuaded. They, who deſpiſe, calumniate and ſcorn the believers of the goſpel,

* Acts ii. 37.

would certainly offer the like treatment to the Author of it, if he was within their reach. They are ill-treated for his ſake, and he conſiders it as an affront to himſelf. Thus he ſaid to Saul of Tarſus, when breathing out threatnings againſt his diſciples, *Why perſecuteſt thou me?* They, who reject his miniſters, reject him *. They who ſpeak diſdainfully of his dying, himſelf, to ſave others; they who reproach or ridicule the humble confidence of his people; who cenſure and revile their hopes and comforts derived from his good word, as enthuſiaſm or hypocriſy; who have no compaſſion for their diſtreſſes, but rather wound them as with a ſword in their bones, ſaying unto them, *Where is now your God* †? are certainly treading, if not altogether with equal vehemence, in the footſteps of the Jewiſh rulers.—May the Lord in mercy ſhew them the danger of their path, and give them a timely apprehenſion of the deſtruction, to which it leads! That they may humble themſelves to his will, implore his pardon, eſpouſe his cauſe, and experience the comforts and privileges of that goſpel, which they have hitherto reviled and ſcorned.

:e x. 16. † Pſal. cxv. 2.

SER-

SERMON XXII.

MESSIAH UNPITIED, AND WITHOUT COMFORTER.

PSAL. lxix. 20.

Reproach [Rebuke] *hath broken my heart, and I am full of heavineſs: and I looked for ſome to take pity, but there was none; and for comforters, but I found none.*

THE greatneſs of ſuffering, cannot be certainly eſtimated, by the ſingle conſideration of the immediate, apparent cauſe; the impreſſion it actually makes upon the mind of the ſufferer, muſt, likewiſe, be taken into the account. That which is a heavy trial to one perſon, may, to another, be much lighter, and, perhaps, no trial at all. And a ſtate of outward proſperity, in which, the eye of a byſtander can ſee nothing wanting to happineſs,

may be, and I doubt not, often is, a ſtate of torment to the poſſeſſor. On the other hand, we know, that the conſolations, with which it has ſometimes pleaſed God to cheer his ſuffering ſervants, have enabled them to rejoice in the greateſt extremities. They have triumphed upon the rack, and while their fleſh was conſuming by the fire. The Lord has had many followers, who, for his ſake, have endured ſcourgings, and tortures, and terrible deaths, not only without reluctance or diſmay, but without a groan. But he himſelf, was terrified, amazed, and filled with anguiſh, when he ſuffered for us. Shall we ſay, The diſciples, in ſuch caſes, have been ſuperior to their Maſter; when yet they acknowledged, that they derived all their ſtrength and reſolution, *from him*? This difference cannot be *well* accounted for, by thoſe who deny that his ſufferings were a proper atonement for ſin, and who can ſee no other reaſon for his death, than, that by dying he was to ſeal the truth of his doctrine, and to propoſe himſelf, to us, as an example of conſtancy and patience. But the great aggravation of MESSIAH's ſufferings, was, the ſuſpenſions of thoſe divine ſupports, which enable

enable his people, to endure the ſevereſt afflictions, to which he calls them. Perhaps ſome perſons, who acknowledge our Lord's true character, may, upon that ground, think his agonies leſs inſupportable, ſince he was not a meer man, but God in the human nature. It was, indeed, the dignity of his perſon, that gave influence and efficacy, to all that he did and ſuffered for ſinners. It is, likewiſe, true, that the weight laid upon him was more than any meer creature could ſuſtain. I would ſpeak, with reverence and reſerve, upon a point, which is too high for our weak minds fully to comprehend. But in whatever way the nature of man, which he aſſumed, was upheld by his eternal power and Godhead, we may venture to affirm, that he derived no ſenſible comfort from it. For we have his own teſtimony, that, in this ſenſe, *God had forſaken him.* The divine nature could neither bleed nor ſuffer. He was truly and properly a man; and as a man, he ſuffered, and he ſuffered alone. Many of his ſervants have rejoiced, while they were tormented, becauſe God overbalanced all they felt, with the light of his countenance; but the Saviour himſelf, deprived of this light,

experienced, to the uttermoſt, all that ſin deſerved, that was not inconſiſtent with the perfection of his character. My text expreſſes, ſo far as human words and ideas can reach, his exquiſite diſtreſs, when *he bore our ſins in his own body, upon the tree. Reproach broke his heart, and when he looked for pity and comfort he found none.*

I. *Reproach hath broken my heart.* We muſt not confine our thoughts here, to the reproach of his enemies. The paſſage in the *Meſſiah*, expreſſes it, agreeably to the verſion of the Pſalms uſed in our liturgy, *Thy rebuke.* Though *he knew no ſin, he was made ſin for us.* He was accounted and treated as a ſinner. Now a ſinner, is, deſervedly, the greateſt object of contempt in the univerſe, and, indeed, the only object of deſerved contempt. Thus he incurred the reproach of the law and juſtice of God. The Holy Father viewing the Son of his love in this light, as charged with the ſins of his people, forſook him. God infinitely hates ſin, and will have no fellowſhip with it; and of this he gave the moſt awful proof, by forſaking his beloved Son, when he took upon him to anſwer for the ſins of men. Then the ſword

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of the Almighty awoke * againſt him, and he ſpared him not.

This rebuke broke his heart. Let broken-hearted ſinners, look, by faith, upon a broken-hearted Saviour. The phraſe denotes wo and dejection inconceivable, with a failure of all reſource. Any thing may be borne while the ſpirit, the heart, remains firm; but if the heart itſelf be broken, who can endure? *A wounded ſpirit, who can bear* †?

It is not, therefore, ſurprizing, that he ſays, *I am full of heavineſs*. In the evangeliſts, we read, that he *began to be ſore amazed, and very heavy* ‡; and he ſaid to his diſciples, *My ſoul is exceeding ſorrowful even unto death*. The moſt emphatical words are uſed, to deſcribe his ſenſation of the bitter conflict of his ſoul, in the garden of Gethſemane, when as yet the hand of man had not touched him. He began to be *amazed* § or aſtoniſhed. It properly ſignifies, to be ſtruck, with terror and ſurprize, by ſome ſupernatural power, ſuch as Belſhazzar felt, when he ſuddenly ſaw the hand-writing againſt him upon the wall ‖. And to be *very heavy* **, ſated with grief,

* Zech.xiii.7. † Prov.xviii.14. ‡ Matt.xxvi.37,38. Mark xiv.33. § ἐκθαμβεῖσθαι. ‖ Dan.v.6. ** ἀδημονεῖν.

full,

full, ſo as to be incapable of more. Some critics explain the word, as importing ſuch an oppreſſion of mind, as quite unfits a perſon for converſe or ſociety, [compare Job xxx.29.] He ſaid, *I am exceeding ſorrowful**—ſurrounded, encompaſſed with ſorrows. It is added, he was in an *agony*†—a conſternation of mind, ſuch as ariſes from the proſpect of ſome impending, unavoidable evil; like the ſuſpence of mariners upon the point of ſhipwreck, who tremble, equally, at the view of the raging waves behind them, and the rocky ſhore before their eyes, on which, they expect, in a few moments, to be daſhed. The evils he was to bear, and to expiate, were now collecting to a point, and formed a dark tremendous ſtorm juſt ready to break upon his devoted head; and the proſpect filled his ſoul with unutterable horror, ſo that his ſweat was, as it were, great drops of blood falling down to the ground. Many have ſweat under extremity of pain, or terror; but his agonies, and the effect of them, were peculiar to himſelf. His ſweat was blood.

This is not a ſubject for declamation. It rather becomes us to adore in humble ſilence,

* περίλυπος. † αγωνια. Luke xxii. 44.

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the manifestation *of the goodness and severity of God**, in the Redeemer's sufferings, than to indulge conjecture and the flights of imagination. What is expresly revealed we may assert, contemplate, and admire. *His soul was made an offering for sin* †. We know but little of the extreme *malignity* of sin, because we have but faint views of the majesty, holiness, and goodness of God, against whom it is committed. Yet a single sin, if clothed with all its aggravations, and the guilt of it brought home with power to the heart, is sufficient to make the sinner a terror to himself. Adam had sinned but once, when he lost all comfort and confidence in God, and sought to hide himself. We have but slight thoughts of the *extent* of sin. Not only positive disobedience, but want of conformity to the law of God, is sinful. Every rising thought which does not comport with that reverence, dependance, and love, which is due to God, from creatures constituted, furnished, and indebted, as we are, is sinful. The sins of one person, in thought, word, and deed, sins of omission, and commission, are innumerable. What then is contained in the col-

* Rom. xi. 22. † Isai. liii. 10.

lective idea, in what the scripture calls, *The sin of the world?* What then must be the atonement, the consideration, on the account of which, the great God is no less righteous than merciful, in forgiving the sins, which his inviolable truth, and the honour of his government engage him to punish. And they are punished, though forgiven. They were charged upon Jesus, they exposed him to a rebuke which broke his heart. They filled him with heaviness. When, therefore, we are assured that the justice of God is satisfied, with respect to every sinner of the race of mankind, who, in obedience to the divine command, makes the sufferings of the Saviour his plea for pardon, and trusts in him for salvation; and that upon this one ground they are freed from all condemnation, and accepted as children; when we are told, that the glory of the divine perfections is displayed in the highest, by this method of saving millions, who deserved to perish; we safely infer the greatness of the cause, from the greatness of the effect. The sufferings of Christ, which free a multitude of sinners from the guilt of innumerable sins, must have been inconceivably great indeed!

II.

II. Under this accumulated diftrefs, though his will was perfectly fubmiffive to the will of God, and his determination fixed to endure all that the cafe required; yet, as he was truly a man, he felt *like* a man. His fortitude was very different from a ftoical hardnefs of fpirit. All the affections of pure humanity, whatever does not imply fin, (fuch as impatience under fuffering, and an undue, premature defire of deliverance) operated in him, as they might do in one of us. It was no impeachment of his innocence, or of his willingnefs, that he wifhed, if it were poffible, for fome relief or alleviation of his mifery. *He looked*, as we do, when we are in heavinefs, for *fome to have pity on him, and to comfort him*, but there was none. Though the pity of our friends is often ineffectual, and can afford us no real affiftance, yet it gives a little relief to have thofe about us, to whom we can open our minds; who will fympathize with us, and compaffionately attend to our complaints, if they can do no more. And to be neglected and forfaken in extremity, efpecially by thofe who have profeffed great friendfhip, or are under great obligations to us, will be felt, as an aggravation of the moft diftreffing cafe

that

that can be imagined. But thus it was with MESSIAH. He had to complain, not only of the cruelty of his enemies, but of the insensibility and inconstancy, of those, who had professed the most cordial attachment to him. The impression this made upon him, as a man, was such, that it is distinctly specified, in the prophetical enumeration of the ingredients, which composed the bitter cup of his sufferings.

He was not only *apprehended* by cruel men, but *betrayed into their hands*, by one, whom, he had admitted into the number of his select apostles, who had been employed in his service, favoured with access to him in his more retired hours, and was present, with the rest, when he kept his last passover, and took his solemn and affectionate leave of them, before he entered upon his passion. It was not an avowed enemy, but one of the twelve who dipped with him in the dish, that was guilty of this enormous ingratitude and treachery. How keen are our resentments, if those, to whom we have shewn great kindness, are discovered to have studied our ruin, while they wore the mask of friendship? Though MESSIAH was incapable of any sinful perturba-

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tion of mind, he was very capable of being painfully affected, by the conduct of Judas; he had reafon to look for pity from him, but he found none.

When he entered the garden of Gethfemane, he commanded, may I not fay, he entreated, his difciples to tarry there and watch with him. And to engage their utmoft attention, he fpoke plainly to them of his diftrefs, faying, *My foul is exceeding forrowful even unto death.* Yet when he returned to them, the firft, the fecond, yea, the third time, *he found them fleeping.* How tender, yet how forcible was his expoftulation, *Could ye not watch one hour* * *!* What! could they know that their Lord was in an agony, wreftling with ftrong cries and tears, and yet fleep! as regardlefs of his forrows, as of their own approaching danger! Were our deareft friends to fhew themfelves, equally infenfible, when we were in extreme anguifh, would not their indifference wound our fpirits? He alfo was a man. And we may conceive it fome addition to his grief, that when he looked to them, for pity and comfort, he found none.

* Matt. xxvii. 40.

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When he was apprehended, notwithſtanding their former proteſtation of zeal and love, *they all forſook him and fled* *. They ſought their own ſafety, and left him in the hands of his enemies. The apoſtle Paul was thus deſerted, and his expreſſions intimate that he felt it. *At my firſt anſwer, no man ſtood by me, all men forſook me* †. He had imbibed, likewiſe, the ſpirit of his Maſter, and prayed that it might not be laid to their charge. And though the Lord Jeſus pitied and excuſed the weakneſs of his diſciples, and permitted them to take care of themſelves, it was, in them, an inſtance, how little he could depend upon thoſe, who were under the ſtrongeſt obligations to him.

But Peter followed his Lord to the hall of the High Prieſt, and there ſaw him, with his own eyes, inſulted, arraigned, and unjuſtly condemned. Might he not expect that *Peter*, the moſt active and earneſt of all his followers, would have pitied him at leaſt, at ſuch a time. Alas! inſtead of pitying him, *Peter denied him*; he denied with oaths, and imprecations, that he had any knowledge of him, whom he had ſeen transfigured upon the mount, and

* Matt. xxvi. 56. † 2 Tim. 4. 16.

agonizing in the garden. We read, *That the Lord turned and looked upon Peter* *. Who can conceive the energy of that look? It was full of meaning, and Peter well underſtood it. Surely, though a look of tenderneſs and compaſſion, it conveyed the expoſtulation of an injured benefactor, no leſs forcibly, than if all, who were preſent, had heard him ſay, "Peter, is this the pity I am to expect from thee?"

When he was nailed to the croſs, he was ſurrounded only by enemies. Theſe, as we have ſeen, far from pitying, or attempting to comfort him, derided and mocked him. How have ſome of us felt for our friends in their dying hours, though we have ſeen every poſſible attention paid to them, and every thing provided and done for them, that could adminiſter to their relief and comfort! But they, who have the faith which realizes unſeen things, have beheld their *beſt* friend expiring in tortures, and inſulted by his murderers, in his laſt moments.

But had all his diſciples been near him, and had all his enemies been his friends, ſtill, in *his* ſituation, he would have been alone.

* Luke xxiv. 61.

The loſs of the light of God's countenance, will, to the ſoul that has enjoyed it, create a univerſal ſolitude, and render every earthly good taſteleſs, in proportion as that ſoul is united to him in love; and ſtill more, if there be ſuperadded a ſenſe of his diſpleaſure. They, who have never taſted that the Lord is good, not having known the difference, can have no conception of this ſubject. Their minds are, at preſent, occupied with earthly things; and while they are thus engaged with trifles, they cannot believe, though they are repeatedly told it, that to an immortal ſpirit, a ſeparation from the favour of God, involves in it the very eſſence of miſery. But ſhould death ſurprize them in their ſins, tear them from all that they have ſeen and loved, and plunge them into an unknown, unchangeable world, then (alas! too late!) they will be ſenſible of their immenſe, irreparable loſs, in being cut off from the fountain of life and comfort. A ſuſpenſion of this divine preſence, with an awful ſenſe and feeling of what thoſe, for whom he made himſelf reſponſible, deſerved, was the moſt dreadful part of the Redeemer's ſufferings.—He was perfectly united to the will and love of his heavenly Father,

and, by the perfect holineſs of his nature, incapable of taſting ſatisfaction in any thing elſe, if his preſence were withdrawn. But when he endured the curſe of the law for us, *he looked to God for pity and comfort, but he found none.*

In this glaſs we are to contemplate the demerit of ſin. But there are ſome ſufferings due to the impenitent ſinner, of which MESSIAH was not capable. I mean the conſciouſneſs of perſonal guilt, the gnawings of a remorſeful conſcience, and the rage of deſpair. If we add the idea of eternity to the whole, we may form ſome faint judgment of what they are delivered from, who believe in him, and what miſery awaits thoſe who preſume to reject him. Awful thought, to reject the only Saviour. If they refuſe his mediation, they muſt anſwer in their own perſons. Then they will find no pity, no comforter. For who, or what, can comfort, when the Lord God Omnipotent ariſes to puniſh? What will your pleaſures, your wealth, or friends, do for you, when the hand of the Lord ſhall touch you to the quick? What ſmile can you expect will ſupport you, againſt the terror of his frown?

Should any of you hear the *Messiah* performed again, then and there, if not before, may God impress upon your heart the sense of this passage. Then you will understand, that the sufferings of the Son of God, are, by no means, a proper subject for the amusement of a vacant hour.



SERMON XXIII.

NO SORROW LIKE MESSIAH'S SORROW.

LAM. i. 12.

Is it nothing to you, all ye that paſs by? Behold, and ſee, if there be any ſorrow like unto my ſorrow!

ALTHOUGH the ſcriptures of the Old Teſtament, the law of Moſes, the Pſalms, and the prophecies *, bear an harmonious teſtimony to MESSIAH; it is not neceſſary to ſuppoſe, that every ſingle paſſage, has an immediate and direct relation to him. A method of expoſition has frequently obtained, of a fanciful and allegorical caſt, under the pretext of ſpiritualizing the word of God. Ingenious men, and ſometimes, men, not very ingenious, have endeavoured to diſcover types

* Luke xxiv. 44.

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and myſteries, in the plaineſt hiſtorical parts, where we have no ſufficient evidence, that the Holy Spirit intended to teach them. And, upon very ſlight grounds, a proof, has been attempted, of the great doctrines of the goſpel, which may be proved, much more ſafely and ſolidly, from the paſſages of ſcripture, in which they are, plainly and expreſsly, revealed. But, by taking this courſe, inſtead of throwing real light upon the places they have, in this manner, attempted to explain; they have perplexed their hearers and readers, and led them to queſtion, whether there be *any* fixed and determinate ſenſe of ſcripture, that may be fully depended upon? It is true, when we have the authority of an inſpired expoſitor to lead us, we may follow him without fear; but this will not warrant us to ſtrike out a path for ourſelves, and truſt to our conjectures, where we have not ſuch an infallible guide. The epiſtle to the Hebrews, is a key, to explain to us many paſſages, in a higher ſenſe, than, perhaps, we ſhould have otherwiſe underſtood them. But it is beſt for us to keep within ſafe bounds, and to propoſe our own ſentiments, when not ſupported by New Teſtament authority, with great modeſty;
leſt

left we ſhould incur the cenſure of being wiſe, above what is written. I may, without ſcruple, affirm, that the hiſtory of Sarah and Hagar, is an allegory referring to the two covenants, becauſe the apoſtle Paul * has affirmed it before me; but if I attempted to ſpiritualize the hiſtory of Leah and Rachel, likewiſe, you would not be bound to believe me, without proof. I may preach the goſpel of Chriſt, from a text which mentions the manna, or the braſen ſerpent †, becauſe, our Lord has expounded theſe things, as typical of himſelf. But I muſt not be confident that every reſemblance, which I think I can trace, is the true ſenſe of the place; becauſe, I may imagine many reſemblances and types, which the ſcripture does not authorize.

There is, however, a uſeful way of preaching, *by accommodation*, that is, when the literal ſenſe is firſt clearly ſtated, to apply the paſſage, not directly to prove a doctrine, as if really contained in it, but only to illuſtrate the doctrine, expreſsly taught in other parts of the ſcripture. Thus, for inſtance, if the queſtion of Jonadab to Amnon ‡, were choſen

* Gal. iv. 24. † John iii. 14. John vi. 31, 35.
‡ 2 Sam. xiii. 4.

for the ſubject of a diſcourſe, *Why art thou, being a king's ſon, lean from day to day?* The hiſtory of the context, directly proves the malignity of ſinful inordinate deſire, and the miſery of thoſe who are under its dominion; that it poiſons every ſituation in life, and renders the ſinner incapable of ſatisfaction, though he were a king's ſon. The form of the queſtion might then lead, to obſerve, That believers are king's ſons, to ſhew what are the great privileges of their adoption; and to enquire, how it comes to paſs, that many perſons, ſo highly privileged, are lean, that is, uncomfortable, weak, and languiſhing in their profeſſion? Theſe points might, not improperly, be introduced, by way of accommodation, though they are not, directly, deducible from the literal ſenſe of the queſtion.

The text I have juſt read to you, has led me into this digreſſion. I find it in the ſeries of the paſſages in the *Meſſiah*, but I am not ſure, that, in the literal ſenſe, it immediately refers to him. It is a pathetic exclamation, by which, the prophet Jeremiah expreſſes his grief, or rather the grief of Jeruſalem, when the ſins of the people had given ſucceſs to the Chaldean army, and the temple and the city were

were deſtroyed. Jeruſalem is poetically conſidered as a woman, lately reigning a queen among the nations, but now a captive, diſhonoured, ſpoiled, and ſitting upon the ground. She entreats the commiſeration of thoſe who paſs by, and aſks, *If there be any ſorrow like unto her ſorrow?* Such a queſtion, has often been in the heart, and in the mouth of the afflicted, eſpecially in an hour of impatience. We are all, in our turns, diſpoſed to think our own trials peculiarly heavy, and our own caſes ſingular. But to them who aſk this queſtion, we may anſwer, Yes—there has been a ſorrow greater than yours, greater than the ſorrow of Jeremiah, or of Jeruſalem. They who have heard of the ſorrows of Jeſus, will, ſurely, upon the hearing of this queſtion, be reminded of him, whether it was the intention of the prophet to perſonate him, or not. If we conceive of him hanging upon the croſs, and ſpeaking in this language to us, *Was ever any ſorrow like my ſorrow?* muſt not we reply with admiration and gratitude, "No Lord, never was love, never was grief like thine."

The expoſtulation, and the queſtion, are equally applicable to the ſufferings of MESSIAH.

MESSIAH. The former, indeed, is not inserted in the Oratorio, but I am not willing to leave it out. The higheſt wonder ever exhibited to the world, to angels, and men, is the Son of God, ſuffering and dying for ſinners. Next to this, hardly any thing is more aſtoniſhing to an enlightened mind— than the groſs and ſtupid inſenſibility, with which the ſufferings of the Saviour are treated, and the indifference with which this wonderful event is regarded, by creatures, who are ſo nearly concerned in it. If they believe in him, they will be healed by his wounds, and live by his death. If they finally reject him, they muſt periſh; and their guilt, and miſery, will be greatly aggravated by what they have heard of him! But ſin has ſo blinded our underſtandings, and hardened our hearts, that we have, naturally, no feeling, either for him, or for ourſelves.

I. Is the expoſtulation ſuited to any perſon here? Can I, with propriety, ſay, to ſome who are now preſent, Has this ſubject been, hitherto, nothing to you? Then, ſurely, you have not heard of it before; and, therefore, now you do hear of it, you will, you muſt, be affected. If you were to read in the common



mon news-papers, that a benevolent, and excellent perſon, had fallen into the hands of murderers, who had put him to death in the moſt cruel manner, would it not be ſomething to you? Could you avoid impreſſions of ſurprize, indignation, and grief? Surely, if this tranſaction were *news* to you, it would engroſs your thoughts. But alas! you have rather heard of it too often, till it has become to you as a worn-out tale. I am willing to take it for granted, that you allow the fact. You believe that Jeſus Chriſt ſuffered under Pontius Pilate, was condemned by the Jews, and crucified by the Romans. And is it poſſible this ſhould be nothing to you? Is it too inſignificant to engage, or deſerve your attention? And yet, perhaps, you have wept at a repreſentation, or a narrative, which, you knew, was wholly foundedin fiction. How ſtrange? What! the ſorrows of Jeſus nothing to you! when you admit that he ſuffered for ſinners, and will probably admit that *you* are a ſinner. No longer then boaſt of your ſenſibility! Your heart muſt be a heart of ſtone. Yet thus it is with too many; your tempers, your conduct, give evidence that, hitherto, the death of Jeſus has been nothing

to

to you. You would not have acted otherwise, at least, you would not have acted worse, if you had never heard of his name. Were his sufferings any thing to you, is it possible, that you would live in the practice of those sins, for which no atonement could suffice, but his blood? Were you duly affected by the thought of his crucifixion, is it possible that you could crucify him afresh, and put him to open shame, by bearing the name of a Christian, and yet, living in a course unsuitable to the spirit and precepts of his gospel? But if you are indifferent to *his* grief, is it nothing to you on your own account? What is it nothing to you, whether you are saved or perish; whether you are found at his right, or his left hand, in the great day of his appearance; or whether he shall then say to you, *Come, ye blessed, inherit the kingdom prepared for you*; or, *Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire* *? There is no medium, no alternative. If you refuse this, there remaineth no other sacrifice for sin. This lamentable indifference to the Redeemer's sorrows, is a full proof of the baseness and wickedness of the human heart; and it is felt as such, when the

* Matt. xxvi. 34, 41.

Holy

Holy Spirit convinces of ſin. Natural conſcience, may excite a painful conviction, of the ſinfulneſs of many actions. But this ſtupid unbelief of the heart, is, if I may ſo ſpeak, the ſin of ſins, it is the root and ſource of every evil, and yet, ſo congenial to our very frame as we are depraved creatures, that God alone can make the ſinner feel it *; and when he does feel it, the ſenſe of it wounds and grieves him, more than all his other ſins.

II. With reſpect to the queſtion, if we rightly underſtand what has been obſerved from the ſcripture hiſtory, in the ſix preceding ſermons, concerning the particulars of his paſſion; we may anſwer, without heſitation, Never was ſuffering, or ſorrow, like that, which MESSIAH endured, in the day of the Lord's fierce anger. It is poſſible, that hiſtory, which is little more than a detail of the cruelty and wickedneſs of mankind, may furniſh us with inſtances of many perſons who have ſuffered excruciating torments, and have even been mocked and inſulted in their agonies: But,

1. Was there ever a character, of his dignity and excellence, treated in ſuch a manner?

* John xvi. 9.

Job confidered his former ftate as a great aggravation of his fufferings. He enlarges upon the refpect which had been fhewn him in his profperity. *When I went out to the gate, through the city, the young men faw me and hid themfelves, the aged arofe and ftood up. When the ear heard me, then it bleffed me; and when the eye faw me, it gave witnefs to me**. But afterwards fpeaking of fools, of bafe men, of the vileft of the earth, he adds, *Now am I their fong, yea, their by-word. They abhor me, and fpare not to fpit in my face. They mar my path, they fet forward my calamity, they come upon me as a wide breaking in of waters*†. But Jefus was the Lord of glory. He whom all the angels of God worfhipped, was buffeted and fpit upon by the loweft rabble. If a great king was degraded from his throne, and expofed to the derifion of flaves, this would be a fmall thing, compared with the humiliation of him, who, in his own right, was *King of kings, and Lord of lords*.

2. Was there ever fo innocent a fufferer? When Aaron loft his two fons, he held his peace ‡. A little before, he had been guilty of making the golden calf. The remem-

* Job xxix. 8, 11. † Job xxx. 8—14. ‡ Lev. x. 3.

brance

brance of this offence, compofed his mind under his great trial. He faw that he deferved a ftill heavier punifhment, and, was filent. In like manner, David, when his rebellious fon Abfalom confpired againft his life, was patient, he remembered the adultery and murder he had committed; and, though he mourned under his afflictions, he durft not complain *. The malefactor upon the crofs, fubmitted to his fentence, becaufe he was a malefactor, faying, *And we indeed juftly* †. It is thus with all who know themfelves. Under their fevereft afflictions, they admit the propriety of the prophet's queftion, *Why fhould a living man complain* ‡? And they acknowledge, *It is of the Lord's great mercy, they are not utterly confumed* §. But Jefus was holy, harmlefs, and undefiled; he had fulfilled the whole law, and had done nothing amifs, yet he yielded himfelf *as a lamb to the flaughter, and as a fheep before her fhearers is dumb, fo he opened not his mouth* ||.

3. Did ever any other fufferer, experience, in an equal degree, the day of God's fierce anger? In the greateft of our fufferings, in

* 2 Sam. xvi. 11. † Luke xxiv. 41. ‡ Lam. iii. 39. § Ver. 22. || Ifai. liii. 7.

thofe

those which bear the strongest marks of the Lord's displeasure, there is always some mitigation, some mixture of mercy. At the worst, we have still reason to acknowledge, that *he hath not dealt with us after our own sins, nor according to the full desert of our iniquities* *. If we are in pain, we do not feel every kind of pain at once, yet, we can give no sufficient reason, why we should not. If we are exercised with poverty and losses, yet something worth the keeping, and more than we can justly claim, is still left to us, at least our lives are spared, though forfeited by sin. If we are in distress of soul, tossed with tempest and not comforted, we are not quite out of the reach of hope. Even if sickness, pain, loss, and despair, should all overtake us in the same moment, all is still less than we deserve. Our proper desert is hell, an exclusion from God, and confinement with Satan and his angels, *where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.* Every thing short of this is a mercy. But Jesus, though he had no sin of his own, bore the sins of many. His sufferings were, indeed, temporary, limited in their duration, but otherwise extreme. Witness,

* Psal. ciii. 10.

the

the effects, his heavineſs unto death, his conſternation, his bloody ſweat, his eclipſe upon the croſs, when deprived of that preſence, which was his only, and his exceeding, joy. On theſe accounts, *no ſorrow was like unto his ſorrow!*

The unknown ſorrows of the Redeemer, are a continual ſource of ſupport and conſolation to his believing people. In his ſufferings, they contemplate his atonement, his love, and his example, and they are animated by the bright and glorious iſſue: For he paſſed from death to life, from ſuffering to glory.

1. *His atonement*, apprehended by faith, delivers them from guilt and condemnation, gives them peace with God, and acceſs to him with liberty as children *. Being thus delivered from their heavy burden, and from the power of Satan, and having a way open for receiving ſupplies of grace, and ſtrength, according to their day, they are prepared to take up their croſs, and to follow him.

2. *His love*, in ſubmitting to ſuch ſorrows, for their ſakes, attaches their hearts to him. Great is the power of love! It makes hard

* Rom. v. 1, 2.

things easy, and bitter sweet. Some of us can tell, or rather, we cannot easily tell, how much we would cheerfully do, or bear, or forbear, for the sake of the person whom we dearly love. But this noblest principle of the soul, never can exert itself, with its full strength, till it is supremely fixed upon its proper object. *The love of Christ has a constraining force indeed**! It is stronger than death. It overcomes the world. And *we thus love him, because he first loved us; because he loved us, and gave himself for us* †.

3. *His example.* The thought that he suffered for them, arms them with the like mind. They look to him and are enlightened. By his cross they are crucified to the world, and the world to them. They no longer court its favour, or are afraid of its frown. They know what they must expect, if they will be his servants, by the treatment he met with; and they are content. He, who endured the contradiction of sinners against himself, for them, is worthy that they should suffer, likewise, for him. It is their desire neither to provoke the opposition of men, nor to dread it. They commit themselves to him, and

* 2 Cor. v. 14. † 1 John iv. 19. Gal. ii. 20.

are ſure that he will not expoſe them to ſuch ſufferings, as he endured for them. So, likewiſe, under all the trials and afflictions, which they endure, more immediately, from the hand of the Lord, a lively thought of *his* ſorrows reconciles them to their own. Thus by his ſtripes they are healed, and are comforted by having fellowſhip with him in his ſufferings.

4. Laſtly, if more were neceſſary, (and, ſometimes, through remaining infirmity and ſurrounding temptation, every conſideration is no more than neceſſary) they know that their Lord *paſſed through ſufferings to glory.* And they know (for they have his own gracious promiſe) *that if they ſuffer with him, they ſhall alſo reign with him* *. They are ſure, *that the ſufferings of the preſent life, are not worthy to be compared with the joy which will then be revealed*; *and that when Chriſt, who is their life, ſhall appear, they alſo ſhall appear with him in glory* †; and therefore they are comforted in all their tribulation, and can ſay, *None of theſe things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myſelf, ſo that I may finiſh my courſe with joy* ‡.

* John xii.26. Rom.viii.18. † Col.iii.4. ‡ Acts xx.24.



SERMON XXIV.

MESSIAH'S INNOCENCE VINDICATED.

ISAIAH liii. 8.

He was taken from priſon and from judgment, and who ſhall declare his generation? For he was cut off out of the land of the living; for the tranſgreſſion of my people was he ſtricken.

LET not plain Chriſtians be ſtumbled, becauſe there are difficulties in the prophetical parts of the ſcripture, and becauſe tranſlators and expoſitors, ſometimes, explain them, with ſome difference, as to the ſenſe. Whatever directly relates to our faith, practice, and comfort, may be plainly collected from innumerable paſſages, in which all the verſions, and all ſober expoſitors are agreed. That there are ſome differences, will not appear ſtrange, if we conſider the antiquity of

the Hebrew language, and that the Old Teſtament is the only book extant, which was written, during the time, that it was the common language of the people. For this reaſon we meet with many words which occur but once; and others, which do not occur frequently, are evidently uſed in more than one ſenſe. If we ſuppoſe, that a time ſhould come, when the Engliſh language ſhould be no longer ſpoken, and no more than a ſingle volume in it be preſerved, we may well conceive, that poſterity might differ, as to the ſenſe of many expreſſions, notwithſtanding the aſſiſtances they might obtain, by comparing the Engliſh, with the French, Dutch, and other languages, which were in uſe at the ſame period. Such aſſiſtance, we derive from the Chaldee, Syriac, Greek, and other ancient verſions of the Old Teſtament, ſufficient to confirm us in the true ſenſe of the whole, and to throw light upon many paſſages otherwiſe dark and dubious; and yet, there will remain a number of places, the ſenſe of which, the beſt critics have not been able to fix with certainty. Farther, the prophecies are uſually expreſſed in the ſtyle of poetry, which, in all languages, is remote from the common forms

of

of ſpeaking. The grand evidence to a humble mind, that the Holy Scripture was originally given by inſpiration of God, and that the verſion of it, which by his good providence we are favoured with, is authentic, is, the effect it has upon the heart and conſcience, when enlightened by the Holy Spirit. And without this internal, experimental evidence, the learned are no leſs at a loſs than the vulgar.

An acquaintance with the Hebrew, will, perhaps, ſuggeſt a meaning in this verſe (the latter part only of which is taken into the *Meſſiah*) which may not readily occur to an Engliſh reader. But, the purport of it, is plainly expreſſed, in many other paſſages. The text is not merely a repetition of what was ſpoken before, concerning the Redeemer's ſufferings; rather the declaration, of what was to follow them, begins here. It is the opening of a bright and glorious ſubject. He was taken, he was taken up, like Enoch and Elijah, from priſon, and from judgment, and who can declare his generation? or, (as the word properly ſignifies) his age? Who can declare his ſtate, the eſtabliſhment and duration of his dignity, influence, and govern-

 ment?

ment? For though he was cut off, made an excision and a curse, from amongst men, it was not upon his own account, but for the transgression of my people, that he was smitten.

God was manifested in the flesh *, and, in the flesh, he suffered as a malefactor. Undoubtedly the divine nature is incapable of suffering; but the human nature, which did suffer, was assumed by him *who is over all, God, blessed for ever* †. But he was justified in the Spirit; and sufficient care was taken, that in his lowest humiliation, though he was condemned and reviled, his character should be vindicated. I shall, therefore, consider, at present, the testimonies given to his innocence. Though he was cut off out of the land of the living, it was only as a substitute for others. He was stricken, for the transgression of his people.

1. The first attestation, and, which, of itself, is fully sufficient to establish this point, is, that of *Judas*. He was one of the twelve apostles, who attended our Lord's person, and who were admitted to a nearer and more frequent intercourse with him, than the rest of

* 1 Tim. iii. 16. † Rom. ix. 5.

his

his diſciples. Though our Lord knew that his heart was corrupt, and that he would prove a traitor, he does not appear to have treated him with peculiar reſerve; or, to have kept him more at a diſtance than the other apoſtles; for when he told them, *One of you ſhall betray me*, they had no particular ſuſpicion of Judas. He, therefore, was well acquainted with the more retired hours of his Maſter's life. He had been often with him in Gethſemane, before he went thither to betray him to his enemies. When he had acted this treacherous part, if he, who had been frequently preſent, when Jeſus converſed moſt freely, in private, with his ſelect followers, had known any thing amiſs in his conduct, we may be ſure he would gladly have diſcloſed it, for his own juſtification. Chriſtian ſocieties, have, uſually, been reviled and ſlandered, by thoſe, who have apoſtatized from them; their miſtakes, if they were juſtly chargeable with any, have been eagerly publiſhed and exaggerated; and many things, often, laid to their charge, which they knew not. But Judas, on the contrary, was compelled by his conſcience, to return his ill-gotten gain, to the chief prieſts and elders,

and

and to confefs, *I have finned, in that I have betrayed the innocent blood* *. Confidering the time of making this declaration, when he faw that he was already condemned, and the perfons to whom he made it, even to thofe who had condemned him, it cannot be denied that he was an unfufpected and competent witnefs to his innocence. And the anfwer of the Chief Priefts, implied, that, though their malice could be fatisfied with nothing lefs than the death of this innocent perfon, they were unable to contradict the traitor's teftimony.

2. Though *Pilate*, likewife, condemned MESSIAH to death, to gratify the importunity of the Jews, he repeatedly declared his firm perfuafion of his innocence. And he did it with great folemnity. *He took water, and washed his hands*, publicly, *before the multitude, faying, I am innocent of the blood of this juft perfon* †. He laboured for his releafe, though the fear of man prevailed upon him at laft, as it has upon many, to act in defiance to the light and conviction of his confcience. And from him, we learn, that Herod ‡, notwithftanding he mocked him and fet him at nought, confidered the accufations

* Matt. xxvii. 4. † Ib. xxvii, 24. ‡ Luke xxiii. 15.

of

of his enemies, to be entirely groundlefs. And farther, when the Jews propofed fuch an alteration of the title affixed to his crofs, as might imply, that the claims our Lord had made, were unjuft and criminal, Pilate utterly refufed to comply with their demand.

3. *The thief upon the crofs*, with his dying breath, faid, *This man hath done nothing amifs*. If his competency as a witnefs fhould be difputed, becaufe it is probable he had known but little of him; I admit the objection. Be it fo, that this malefactor, had little perfonal knowledge of our Lord. Then, his opinion of his innocence muft have been founded upon public report; and, therefore, it feems, he fpoke not for himfelf only; but his words may be taken as a proof, that the people at large, though they fuffered themfelves to be influenced by the Chief Priefts, to demand his death, and to prefer, Barabbas, a robber and a murderer, to him, were generally confcious that he had done nothing amifs. Many of thofe who now faid, *Crucify him, Crucify him*, had, not long before, welcomed him with acclamations of praife, faying, *Hofannah to the Son of David*. This inconfiftence, and inconftancy, is not altogether

they might be made the righteousness of God in him. The High Priest of our profession needed not, as those who typified his office of old, *to offer up sacrifice, first, for his own sins, and then for the sins of the people*, for he was perfectly holy, harmless, and undefiled. And had he not been a lamb without spot or blemish, he could not have been accepted on our behalf. It was the perfection of his voluntary obedience to the law of our nature, under which he submitted to be made, which, conjoined with the excellency of his character, as the Son of God, made him meet, able, and worthy, to expiate our transgressions. By the *one offering*—of himself, once offered, *he has made an end of sin, brought in an everlasting righteousness, and having appeared with his own blood within the vail, in the presence of God for us, and ever living to make intercession for all who come unto God by him*, he is proposed in the gospel as *the Author of eternal salvation to all who obey him. In him, all the seed of Israel shall be justified and shall glory* *. In him the true Israel, the partakers of the faith of Abraham shall be saved, saved to the uttermost, *saved with an*

* Isai. xlv. 17, 25.

ever-

trembled greatly; the rocks were rent; the graves opened; and the dead arose. These events, in connection with what had passed before, extorted an acknowledgement of his innocence, from the Roman centurion, who was appointed to attend his execution.

Thus, it appears, that Judas, who betrayed him; the Jewish council, which could not find sufficient ground, even though they employed false and suborned witnesses, to pass sentence upon him; Herod, who derided him; Pilate, who condemned him; the malefactor, who suffered with him; and the commander of the soldiers who crucified him, all combined in a declaration of his innocence: God himself confirming their word, by signs and wonders in heaven, and upon earth.

It may seem quite unnecessary to prove the innocency of him, who, in his human nature was absolutely perfect, and in whom, the presence and fulness of God dwelt. And it *is*, indeed, unnecessary to those who believe in his name. It is, however, a pleasing contemplation to them, and has an important influence upon their faith and hope. In this they triumph, *that he who knew no sin himself, was made sin*, was treated as a sinner for them, *that*

in ſome parts, the unrivalled ſublimity of deſcription in others; the juſtneſs and diſcrimination of characters; the views it unfolds, of the workings of the human heart, and the ſprings of action, ſo exactly conformable to experience and obſervation, might ſurely recommend it to their notice. And poſſibly, if it *did* claim no higher authority than a human compoſition, men, who have any juſt pretenſions to taſte, would admire it, no leſs, than they now undervalue it. But becauſe it does not flatter their pride, nor give indulgence to their corrupt propenſities, they are afraid to ſtudy it, leſt the internal marks of its divine original, ſhould force unwelcome convictions upon their minds. Therefore they remain willingly ignorant of its contents, or the knowledge they diſcover of it, is ſo very ſuperficial, that a well-inſtructed child of ten years of age, may ſmile at the miſtakes of critics and philoſophers. That ſuch a book is extant, is undeniable. How can they account for its production? A view of what they actually have done, will warrant us to aſſert, that the wiſeſt men of antiquity, neither would have written ſuch a book if they could; nor were they able, had they been ever

ſo

ſo willing. And yet we have as good evidence, that the New Teſtament was written by plain and unlearned men, as we have for any fact recorded in hiſtory. How could ſuch men, invent ſuch a book! And how ſhould they, without ſeeming directly to deſign it, but incidentally, as it were, repreſent, that perſons of ſuch various characters, who concurred in putting Jeſus to death, ſhould all equally concur in eſtabliſhing the teſtimony of his innocence!

True Chriſtians, when they ſuffer unjuſtly, may learn, from the example of their Lord, to ſuffer patiently. The apoſtle preſſes this argument upon ſervants *—who in thoſe days were chiefly bond-ſervants, or ſlaves. He, therefore, evidently ſuppoſes, that the knowledge of the goſpel was ſufficient to qualify people, in the loweſt ſituations of human life, with a fortitude, and magnanimity of ſpirit, of which philoſophy could ſcarcely reach the conception. In effect, to be much taken up with the intereſts of ſelf, to live upon the breath of others, to be full of reſentment for every injury, and watchful to retaliate it, theſe are the properties and tokens

* 1 Pet. ii. 18—20.

of a little and narrow mind. It requires no energy, no ſacrifice, no reſolution, to acquire ſuch a diſpoſition; for it is natural to us, and powerful and habitual, in the weakeſt and leaſt reſpectable characters. But to act uniformly as the ſervants of God, ſatisfied with his approbation, under the regulation of his will, and, for his ſake cheerfully to bear whatever hardſhips a compliance with duty may expoſe us to, enduring grief, ſuffering wrongfully, and acting in the ſpirit of benevolence and meekneſs, not only to the good, but alſo to the froward; this indicates a true nobleneſs of ſoul. And to this, we are called, by our profeſſion; for thus Chriſt ſuffered. He did no ſin, neither was guile found in his mouth; yet he was reviled, but he reviled not again. He ſuffered, though innocent; but he threatened not. He was crucified by wicked men; but he prayed for them, while they were nailing him to the croſs. This was an eminent branch of the mind that was in Chriſt, and it ought to be a diſtinguiſhing feature in the character of his people. For, is the diſciple above his Lord? or ſhould the conduct of the diſciple contradict that of his Lord? Undoubtedly, ſo far as we are partakers

in

in the doctrine of his sufferings, and have real fellowship with him in his death, we shall resemble him. *If we say, we abide in him, we ought to walk even as he walked**. But they, who, calling themselves Christians, are full of the spirit of self-justification, contention, and complaint; while they profess to believe in him, deny him by their works. The apostles, Peter and John, deeply affected by their obligations to him, and by the exquisite pattern of meekness and tenderness, which he had set before them, departed from the presence of the council, not swelling with anger, nor hanging down their heads with grief, but *rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his sake* †. And he deserves no less, from us, than he did from them. It was for us, no less than for them, that he endured reproach, and was content to die as a malefactor, though he was innocent.

* 1 John ii. 6. † Acts v. 41.

SERMON XXV.

MESSIAH RISING FROM THE DEAD.

PSAL. xvi. 10.

For thou wilt not leave my ſoul in hell; neither wilt thou ſuffer thine Holy One to ſee corruption.

THAT the goſpel is a divine revelation, may be ſummarily proved, from the character of its Author. If an infidel was ſo far diveſted of prejudice and prepoſſeſſion, as to read, the hiſtory of Jeſus Chriſt recorded by the evangeliſts, with attention, and in order to form his judgment of it, ſimply and candidly, as evidence ſhould appear; I think he muſt obſerve many particulars in his ſpirit and conduct, ſo very different from the prevailing ſentiments of mankind, as to convince him, that man, in his preſent ſtate, could not poſſibly have conceived the idea of ſuch a character. Poets, and hiſtorians, have often

employed their powers in delineating, what appeared to them, the great, and the excellent, in human conduct. But how different are the pictures of their admired heroes, ſages and legiſlators, from the portrait of the Saviour, as it is drawn, with the utmoſt ſimplicity, by plain, unlettered men, who, without art or affectation, only deſcribe what they profeſs to have ſeen and heard. I fix, at preſent, upon a ſingle conſideration, which, perhaps, cannot be expreſſed more properly, or forcibly, than in the words of an ingenious writer, now living. " He is the only founder of a religion, in the hiſtory of mankind, " which is totally unconnected with all human policy and government, and, therefore totally unconducive to any worldly " purpoſe whatever. All others, Mahomet, " Numa, and even Moſes himſelf, blended " their religious inſtitutions with their civil, " and by them, obtained dominion over their " reſpective people; but Chriſt neither aimed " at, nor would accept of any ſuch power. " He rejected * every object which all other " men purſue, and made choice of thoſe " which others fly from and are afraid of.

* John xviii. 36.

" He

"He refuſed power, riches, honours, and "pleaſure; and courted poverty, ignominy, "tortures, and death. Many have been the "enthuſiaſts and impoſtors, who have en-"deavoured to impoſe on the world, pre-"tended revelations; and ſome of them from "pride, obſtinacy, or principle, have gone ſo "far, as to lay down their lives, rather than "retract: but I defy hiſtory to ſhew one, "who ever made his own ſufferings and "death *, a neceſſary part of his original plan, "and eſſential to his miſſion. This Chriſt "actually did, he foreſaw, foretold, declared "their neceſſity, and voluntarily endured "them †."

The death of our Lord, was, indeed, eſſential to his plan; as ſuch, it was conſtantly in his view, and he often ſpoke of it. Probably it was the *whole* of his enemies plan; and when they ſaw him dead, buried, and the ſepulchre ſealed, they triumphed in their ſucceſs, and expected to hear of him no more. But the ſcriptures, which were read in their ſynagogues every ſabbath day, foretold his reſur-

* John xii. 24, 32, 33.

† Jenyns's Internal Evidence of the Chriſtian Religion, p. 33, 34. 3d Edition.

rection from the dead. The text before us, if there were no other, is a ſufficient proof of this, to thoſe who acknowledge the authority of the New Teſtament, ſince it is expreſsly applied to him, by the apoſtles, Peter and Paul.

The word, in the Hebrew text, rendered, in our verſion, *Soul*, is uſed in different ſenſes. According to the connection in which it ſtands, it ſignifies breath, life, ſoul, or ſpirit, and ſometimes the dead body. The correſponding Greek word, where the apoſtle quotes this verſe *, has, likewiſe, various ſignifications. And the original words anſwering to *Hell*, ſignify, both the inviſible world, or the ſtate of the dead, and ſometimes the grave. Notwithſtanding this ſeeming diverſity, we are at no loſs here for the preciſe ſenſe. Scripture is the beſt interpreter of itſelf. It is evidently the apoſtle's deſign to prove that the Pſalmiſt foreſaw, and foretold, the reſurrection of that body which was taken down dead from the croſs, and laid in Joſeph's tomb. With this body our Lord aroſe on the third day, according to the ſcriptures.

* Acts ii. 27.

Though

Though MESSIAH was, for our ſakes, treated as a malefactor, all who were immediately concerned in his death, were conſtrained (as we have ſeen) to declare his innocence. But he was worthy of a more ſolemn and authoritative juſtification. Accordingly, *He was declared to be the Son of God, with power, by his reſurrection from the dead* *.

The apoſtle expounds *thine Holy One*, by the word *Fleſh* †. The human nature, the body formed by the immediate power of God, and born of a virgin, was holy.—It was, *A holy thing* ‡. Perfect and pure, and, therefore, naturally, not mortal, though ſubject to death for us. In this nature, the Son of God was charged with ſins not his own; he became willingly reſponſible for many §. Whatever was neceſſary on the behalf of ſinners, to render their forgiveneſs conſiſtent with the honour of the law, juſtice, truth, and government of God, was exacted of him, and he performed, and paid, to the utmoſt. He made a full atonement for ſin; and though he had power over his life, he hung hour after hour in agonies upon the croſs, till he ſaid;

* Rom. i. 4. † Acts ii. 29. ‡ Luke i. 35. § Matt. xx. 28.

It

It is finiſhed. Then, he reſigned his ſpirit into the hands of his heavenly Father. He was afterwards buried. But having finiſhed his whole undertaking, deſtroyed death, and him that had the power of it, and opened the way to the kingdom of heaven, in favour of all who ſhould believe in him, *it was not poſſible that he ſhould be detained in the grave* *. He had power, likewiſe, to reſume the life he had laid down for his ſheep; and he aroſe the third day, to exerciſe all power and authority in heaven and in earth.

His reſurrection, therefore, is the grand principal fact, upon which the truth and importance of Chriſtianity reſts. For though Chriſt died, if he had not riſen again, *your faith, and our preaching, would be in vain.* We ſhould be *yet in our ſins* †. And though it was not neceſſary that his reſurrection ſhould have been ſo publicly known, at the time, as his crucifixion, the evidence for it is ſtrong and deciſive. No one point of ancient hiſtory is capable of ſuch clear, accumulated proof. The apoſtles frequently ſaw him, converſed with him, eat and drank with him, and were aſſured, that it was he, by many in-

* Acts ii. 24. † 1 Cor. xv. 17.

fallible

fallible proofs. They could not be deceived themſelves, nor could they have any temptation to deceive others. They declared his reſurrection, to the very people who put him to death; and they confirmed it by many indiſputable miracles, which they performed in his name. They perſevered in this teſtimony, in defiance of the malice of the Jews, and the ſcorn of the heathens. And by this doctrine of a crucified riſen Saviour, though unſupported by the patronage of human power, yea, though oppoſed by it in every place, they effected that change, in the moral world, wherever they went, which the philoſophers had not been able to produce, by all their inſtructions, in a ſingle inſtance; turning men, whom they found under the ſtrongeſt prejudices of education and habit, *from darkneſs to light, and from the worſhip of dumb idols to ſerve the living and the true God* *.

But there are proofs of this point which depend not upon arguments or hiſtory, which require neither learning, genius, nor ſtudy to comprehend; but are equally adapted to perſons, of all capacities, and in all circumſtances. Theſe are, the effects which this

* 1 Theſſ. i. 9.

doctrine produces, on the hearts of those, who truly receive it upon the authority of scripture, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, whose office it is to open the eyes of the mind, to take of the things of Jesus, (what the scripture reveals of his person, offices, and glory) and to present them, with infallible light and evidence, to those who humbly yield themselves to his teaching. These are made partakers *of the power of his resurrection* *. It delivers them from guilt and fear, animates them with confidence towards God, weans them from the love and spirit of this evil world, inspires them with great and glorious hopes, and delivers them from the fear of death. They *are risen with Christ*, by faith, *and seek the things which are above* †, where they know their Lord and Saviour is seated in glory.

I do but touch upon these particulars at present, because the subject will come under our consideration again, from a subsequent passage in the Oratorio. Yet I would not wholly omit leading your reflections to them, though what I briefly offer now, may make, what I shall then offer, (if my life is prolonged to

* Phil. iii. 10. † Col. iii. 1.

proceed

proceed ſo far) appear under the diſadvantage of a repetition of the ſame thoughts. Indeed, I know not how to place the proof of this capital doctrine in a light entirely new. The moſt ſatisfactory proofs are the moſt obvious; and it would be folly to ſubſtitute weaker in their place, for the ſake of novelty. But if *I ſhould* live to reſume the ſubject, *ſome of you*, who are now preſent, may not live to hear me. So far as concerns the fact, I may hope, that the moſt, or all of you, are believers, and that you are already perſuaded in your minds, that *the Lord is riſen indeed* *! I am not preaching to Jews, or Mahometans, but to profeſſed Chriſtians. But permit me to aſk, What influence this truth has upon your hopes, your tempers, and your conduct? The powers of darkneſs know that Chriſt is riſen. They believe, they feel, they tremble. I hope none of you will be content with ſuch a faith as may be found in the fallen angels. As ſurely as he is riſen, he will at length return to judge the world. *Behold he cometh in the clouds, and every eye ſhall ſee him!* They who are prepared to meet him, who are waiting for him, and who long for his appear-

* Luke xxiv. 34.

ance,

ance, have reaſon to rejoice that he once died, and roſe again!

Many are the advantages which true Chriſtians derive, from a ſpiritual and enlightened knowledge of this doctrine. I will mention a few.

1. As MESSIAH was *delivered*, that is delivered up, as a hoſtage to the demands of juſtice, *for our offences*, ſo they know, that *he was raiſed again for our juſtification* *. By virtue of that union, which ſubſiſts between MESSIAH, as the head of his body the church, and all his members; that is, all in the ſucceſſive ages of the world, who believe in him by a faith of divine operation: he is their legal repreſentative; he and they are conſidered as one. His ſufferings, his whole humiliation and obedience unto death, is ſo imputed to them, that they, thereby, are exempted from condemnation; and though not from all ſufferings, yet, from all that is properly penal, or, ſtrictly, a puniſhment. What they ſuffer, is only in a way of diſcipline or chaſtiſement; and to them a token, not of wrath, but of love. On the other hand, as he by his reſurrection, was vindicated, juſti-

* Rom. v. 25.

fied

fied from the reproaches of his enemies, declared to be the Son of God, with power, and raiſed to glory; they have fellowſhip with him herein. God exalted him to glory, *and gave him a name above every name*, that *their faith and hope might be in God* *. They are not only pardoned, but accepted in the Beloved. And after this ſtate of diſcipline is ended, they ſhall be treated as if they had never ſinned. For if their ſins are ſought for, in that day, they ſhall not be found. If any charge ſhould be brought againſt them, it ſhall be overruled — by this comprehenſive unanſwerable plea—*Chriſt that died, yea, rather, that is riſen again; appears in the preſence of God*, acknowledges them as his own, and *makes interceſſion for them* †. Among men, a criminal may obtain a pardon, may eſcape the ſentence he has deſerved, and yet be left in a deſtitute and miſerable condition. But juſtification, is, God's manner of pardoning ſinners, according to the ſovereignty and riches of his grace, in the Son of his love. Thoſe, whom he pardons, he alſo juſtifies; and whom he juſtifies, he alſo glorifies. And even now in this life, though it doth not yet

* 1 Pet. i. 21. † Rom. viii. 33, 34.

appear

appear what they ſhall be, though their preſent privileges are far ſhort of what they hope for, *and though eye hath not ſeen, nor ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man, to conceive what God hath prepared for them* *; yet even now are they *the children of God* †—and in the midſt of their trials and infirmities, though conſcious of much defect, and many defilements, in their beſt hours and ſervices; and though they have not forgotten their iniquities and provocations, when they lived without God in the world, yet, according to the meaſure of their faith, exerciſed upon their Saviour, who was raiſed for their juſtification, they can rejoice in the knowledge of their acceptance, and rely upon him for their perſeverance; and they dare approach the great, holy, and heart-ſearching God, as to a Father, and pour out their hearts before him, with greater freedom, than they can uſe to their deareſt earthly friends. And while they feel and confeſs themſelves unworthy of the ſmalleſt of his mercies, they are not afraid to aſk for the greateſt bleſſings his bounty can beſtow, even to be ſet as a ſeal upon his heart, and upon his arm, to be filled with all his com-

* 1 Cor. ii. 9. † 1 John iii. 2.

municable fulneſs, and to claim him as their everlaſting portion.

2. The reſurrection of Chriſt from the dead, is a pledge and ſpecimen of that almighty power, which is engaged, on their behalf, to overcome all the obſtacles, difficulties and enemies, they are liable to meet with in their pilgrimage, which threaten to diſappoint their hopes, and to prevent them from obtaining their heavenly inheritance. The firſt communication of a principle of faith and ſpiritual life to their hearts, whereby they are delivered from the dominion of ſin, and from the ſpirit and love of the world, is attributed to *the exceeding greatneſs of that mighty power*, which raiſed the dead body * of their Lord from the grave, and ſet him at his own right hand, *far above all principality and might, and every name that is named.* And often the church, collectively, in its militant ſtate, and the individuals which compoſe it, in their perſonal concerns, have been brought, to outward appearance, exceeding low. Their enemies have ſeemed upon the point of triumphing, and ſaying, Down with them, even to the ground. Such was the boaſt of the

* Eph. i. 19—21.

Jewiſh rulers, when they had ſlain the Shepherd, and diſperſed his flock. But it was a ſhort-lived boaſt. He aroſe, he aſcended, he took poſſeſſion of his kingdom for himſelf, and for them. He poured out his Holy Spirit upon them, and they went forth preaching his word, which ſpread like the light of advancing day, from Judea to Samaria, and to the diſtant parts of the earth. The united force of the powers of hell and earth, endeavoured to ſuppreſs it, but in vain. Many nations and kingdoms laboured to extirpate the very name of Chriſtianity from among men, but they ſucceſſively periſhed in the attempt; and the cauſe, againſt which they raged, is ſtill preſerved. *It is founded upon a rock, and the gates of hell cannot prevail againſt it* *. Nor can any weapon proſper that is formed againſt the weakeſt and meaneſt of thoſe, who ſincerely eſpouſe this cauſe. He, to whom they have devoted and entruſted themſelves, has promiſed, *that none ſhall pluck them out of his hands* †. And while he remains faithful to his word, and able to fulfil it, they ſhall be ſafe. Yet they are often preſſed above meaſure, beyond ſtrength, in-

* Matt. xvi. 18. † John x. 28.

ſomuch that they, perhaps, deſpair even of life. But when they are at the loweſt, the Lord is their helper; and they are taught, by the exigencies they paſs through, to truſt, not in themſelves, *but in God who raiſeth the dead* *. It is, indeed, the Lord's uſual method of training up his people, to an habitual dependance upon himſelf. When he has raiſed their expectations by his promiſes, he permits, as it were, a temporary death, to overcloud their proſpect; and that, which, he has ſaid, he will ſurely do for them, appears for a ſeaſon, to the judgment of ſenſe, impracticable and hopeleſs. We might illuſtrate this point at large from the hiſtory of Abraham, of Iſrael in Egypt, of David, and of the rebuilding of the ſecond temple. And I doubt not, but it might be illuſtrated from the hiſtory of many in this aſſembly. If you have been walking with God for any conſiderable time, you have met with turns and changes, which have almoſt put you to a ſtand. You have been, and, perhaps, now are in ſuch circumſtances, that you feel you have no reſource in yourſelf, and you are ſure, that the help of man cannot relieve you; *but while your help is in*

* 2 Cor. i. 9.

the name of the Lord who made heaven and earth *, and while you are warranted to truſt in him, *who raiſeth the dead,* you have no juſt reaſon to deſpond. It was a dark ſeaſon with the diſciples, when their Lord, whom they loved, *and in whom they truſted, that it had been he who ſhould have redeemed Iſrael* †, was condemned, and put to death. But the appointed third day, relieved their fears, and turned their mourning into joy.

3. His reſurrection is the pledge and pattern of ours. As certainly as Chriſt, the firſt-fruits, is riſen, ſo certainly ſhall they, that are Chriſt's, ariſe at his coming. And each of his people ſhall ariſe, *aliuſque & idem* ‡. Their bodies, though properly their own, ſhall be changed, *and faſhioned like unto his glorious body* §. This corruptible muſt put on incorruption; and the body, which is ſown in diſhonour and weakneſs, be raiſed in power and glory. Fleſh and blood, in its preſent ſtate, cannot inherit the kingdom of God. The body, in this life, is a clog and a burden to thoſe who place their chief happineſs in the ſervice of God, and in communion with him.

* Pſal. cxxiv. 8. † Luke xxiv. 20, 21. ‡ Another, and yet the ſame. § Phil. iii. 21.

It

It is a vile body, defiled by ſin, and it defiles their beſt deſires and nobleſt efforts. Even the grace of the Holy Spirit, by which they live, though perfectly pure in itſelf, is debaſed, when communicated to *them*, and exerciſed under the diſadvantages of a ſinful nature, as the beſt wine, will receive a taint, if poured into a foul veſſel. The body, in another view, is a priſon, in which, the ſoul, confined and pent up, is limited in its operations, and impeded in its perceptions of divine things. Though we are probably ſurrounded by the glorious realities of the ſpiritual world, only ſhort and tranſient glances of them are diſcoverable by us; we ſee but by reflection, and darkly *; we know but in part, and ſhould know nothing of them, but for the good report of the word of God. Farther, the body, as it is the ſeat of innumerable infirmities, and the medium which connects us with the calamities incident to this mortal ſtate, is often a great hindrance to our moſt deſirable enjoyments. Pain and ſickneſs call off the attention, and indiſpoſe our faculties, when we wiſh to be moſt engaged in prayer, detain us from the ordinances, or prevent the

* 1 Cor. xiii. 12.

 pleaſure

pleaſure we hope for in waiting upon the Lord in them. But our new, ſpiritual, and glorified bodies, will be free from all defilement, or defect. They will be compleatly qualified to anſwer the beſt wiſhes, and moſt enlarged activity, of the ſoul. Then, but not till then, we hope to be all eye, all ear, always upon the wing in his ſervice, and perfectly conformed to his image, in light, holineſs, and love; for then we *ſhall ſee him as he is*, without any interpoſing veil or cloud *.

* 1 John iii. 2.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

